# BING

SPRING 2020
**No. 184**

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

# THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

Founded in 1936, the world's longest-running fan club – as recognised by the **Guinness Book of World Records**

## Our Mission:

To perpetuate the memory and the musical legacy of Bing Crosby for the benefit of future generations

## Membership

Membership renewals fall due on 1st January each year and subscription rates effective for 2020 are:

| | |
|---|---|
| USA and Canada | **US $35 or C$45 per annum** |
| UK | **£20 per annum** |
| Mainland Europe, including Eire | **£23 per annum** |
| Australia and New Zealand | **A$50 per annum** |
| Rest of the World | **£24 per annum** |

All remittances should be sent to Michael Crampton in **£ sterling** payable to **The International Club Crosby** with the exception of:

(a) American members who should pay Perry Huntoon in US dollars

(b) Canadian members who should pay Scott Payne in US or Canadian dollars

(c) Australian and New Zealand members who should pay David Currington in Australian dollars

## Websites

**Club:** www.club-crosby.org
**BING Magazine:** www.bingmagazine.co.uk
**Bing Crosby Enterprises:** www.BingCrosby.com
**Facebook:** www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby/44544738326
**Wikipedia:** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Club_Crosby

**Articles** for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor or to the American Co-Editor.

**Other Correspondence** concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should either be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer or to your local representative please.

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# Editorial

What a wonderful time we had in the run-up to Christmas in the UK! The new CD "Bing at Christmas" was imaginatively and energetically promoted in all forms of the media by Decca Records and by Robert Bader and the Crosby family and they were rewarded by putting Bing back in the British album charts. Mary Crosby in particular deserves our special thanks for the energetic way she put herself about in the UK and Irish media. Peaking at No. 9, the album spent 5 weeks in the UK album charts and at the same time "White Christmas" reached No. 31 in the British singles chart.

Some of the older Crosby enthusiasts may well prefer the original recordings, but "Bing at Christmas" is a very sensible and commercial approach to bringing the tracks up-to-date and making them more relevant to modern audiences. Well done all concerned in putting this prestigious project together.

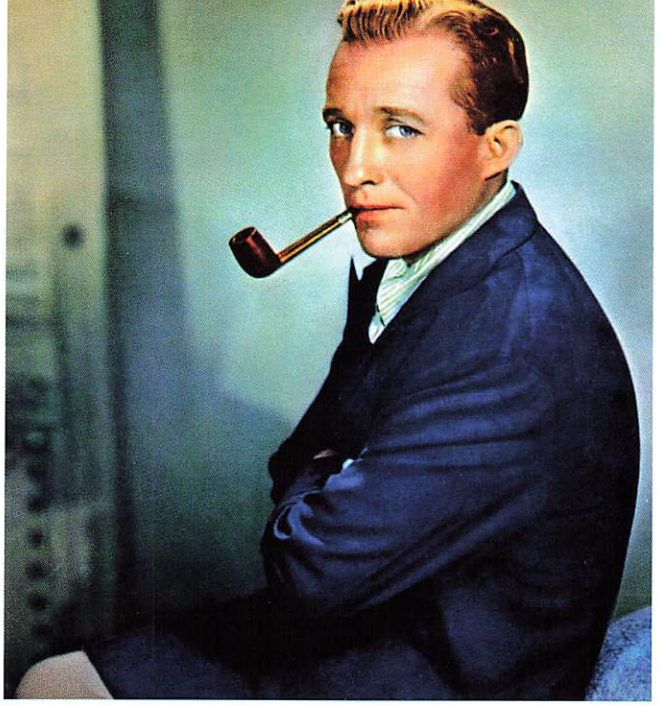
I wonder whether it would be a commercial proposition for Decca to give the London Symphony Orchestra treatment to Bing's hits of the 40s and 50s. It would certainly be interesting.

One of Bing's radio series that has not been mined too extensively is *Philco Radio Time* and we have been working with Sepia Records to put together a 2-CD set of selected songs from the series. See *Keeping Track* for full details. An insert is enclosed with this issue for you to order it. You'll be delighted with the quality.

In "Bing on the Box" we give details of the showing of seven Crosby Christmas specials by getTV and Jon Oye has put together a montage of screen shots from the shows which we have used as our back cover. Also in this issue, we reproduce extracts from the massive newspaper coverage in the UK of the "Bing at Christmas" album and Graham Pascoe tells us about the impact in Australia too. David Lobosco considers *Double or Nothing*, John Bassett issues a challenge about a rare record and Martin McQuade looks at Bing's relationship with Judy Garland. Jason Liddiard reports on his latest club meetings and Perry Huntoon went to see a very special show in his locality. Mike Kaptanis looks at the Crosby imitators and Ken Crossland wonders if everything old is new again. In short, there's a lot for you digest.

Happy reading!

**Malcolm Macfarlane** *macwilmslo@aol.com*



My fellow British Co-Editor and I don't disagree on too many things, but on the matter of symphony orchestra overdubs of recordings from the past, we must agree to disagree. I have never been a fan of these digital treatments of recordings that weren't meant to be tampered with, whether it be sides by Crosby, Rosemary Clooney, or Elvis Presley. I know that they exist, and I understand the commercial reasons why, but I have never been interested in such projects. I must admit, however, that, from a technical standpoint, *Bing at Christmas* was really well done: it features tasteful, tuneful arrangements that don't get in the way of Bing's voice and that, in many ways, offer new perspectives on recordings that we have heard a million times as Bing had originally meant them. On that count, then, my congratulations go to everyone involved.

The fact that this reimagining of the sound of Bing the Christmas singer put our man back in the headlines and on the charts is also a positive by-product of the album, and as Crosby fans, we should all be extremely happy about that. It is too bad, though, that the efforts to publicize the CD stateside weren't as energetic as they were across the pond and down under. It is true that Bing is revered in the British Isles and in Australia, but here in the land of his birth, where his musical tastes and skills were first developed, we missed not feeling his presence as much.

The news of the upcoming Sepia Records release of Philco Radio Time nuggets (and a two-CD set no less!) should be received by all Crosby fans worldwide with enthusiasm. Knowing Sepia's painstaking efforts to always produce high-quality material, I have no doubt that it's going to be a marvelous set, and one of the highlights of 2020 for Bing aficionados. All my gratitude goes to everyone involved in this project, which shows that there is still interest in unreleased Crosby recordings. It is always comforting to know that in these uncertain times (Brexit, presidential elections in the U.S., devastating fires in Australia, the recent virus outbreak in China) there is still one thing for certain: that Bing's beautiful baritone will still be there to see us through any difficulties.

As always, thanks to all the contributors that make it possible to put together this magazine and that Malcolm has already listed. Enjoy this new issue and may all members have a joyful, Bing-filled spring season!

**Anton Garcia-Fernandez** *antongarciafdez@gmail.com*

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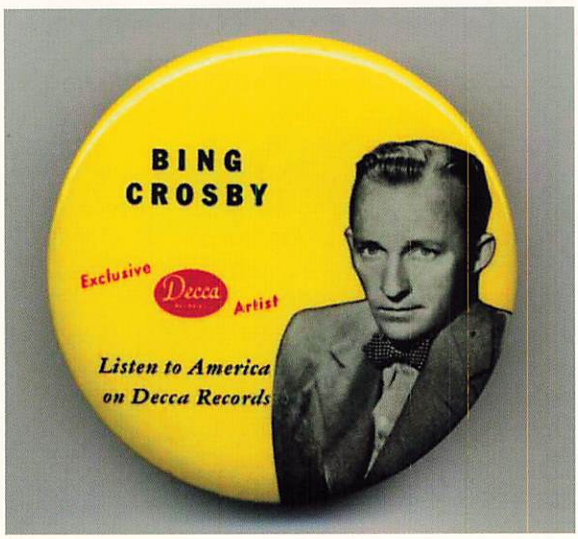



# Secretary / Treasurer's Report

Members will have been truly saddened to learn of the passing of our late esteemed American representative Wig Wiggins who devoted much of the last 30 years to supporting and growing the International Club Crosby. Wig's contribution to the club was monumental and the esteem with which he was held will be apparent in the many tributes that Malcolm features on another page.

Although I had not long returned from visiting with Wig, I flew back to Arlington, Virginia to attend Wig's memorial service in a personal capacity and also to represent the ICC. Wig's family had assembled a display of his artefacts including Crosby memorabilia with Jonzo's and the Discography's being prominently featured. The memorial comprised music and speeches from family and friends opening with "Where the Blue of the Night" and closing with "Once in a While". Wig's son Frontis opened and conducted the memorial with Wig's daughter Joanne closing with a very moving tribute.

Wig was a senior diplomat who always wore a bow tie at work and his former colleagues made amusing references to this in their speeches. All who spoke attested to his human qualities and to the fact that he touched other people's lives in a very positive and endearing way. Wig made a giant contribution to Crosbyana and we can best honour his memory by continuing to support the ICC and its aims and, yes, play those Jonzo CDs which would not have come about without Wig's tireless endeavour.

It was a privilege to be Wig's friend. I will miss him, as many more will, but I am truly grateful that our paths crossed and our friendship lasted so long, allowing us to work together on behalf of the ICC. RIP.

***

2019 was a year of change for the ICC as we moved to a new printer and made changes to our postal arrangements. This new approach has resulted in savings which, combined with the exceptional generosity of our donating members, leaves the ICC in a sound financial position for 2020 and almost certainly 2021.

I would like to commend Malcolm and the ICC team for their unstinting and dedicated work during the past year and extend my very grateful thanks to the members listed below who have gifted the magnificent sum of over £2500 in addition to their annual fees.

We really are fortunate to have such keen and loyal members.

## New Members

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members with a sincere wish that you will derive much interest and enjoyment from your membership of the club. You are amongst friends.

**SWEDEN**
Sven Igmar – Pettersson (Lerum)

**THE NETHERLANDS**
Philippe Peerboom (Amersfoort)

**UNITED KINGDOM**
Nigel Burvill (Yardley, Birmingham), Leslie Woods (Norwich, Norfolk)

**UNITED STATES**
Chris Hammond (Powell, Tennessee), Jason Whiton (Mill Valley, California), Robert Knott (Brooklyn, New York), Larry Gassman (Fullerton, California), Walden Hughes (Costa Mesa, California), Vicki Webster (Cincinnati, Ohio)

## Donations

We have a massive list of the members who have been exceptionally generous with their gifts and we are truly grateful for their support.

**AUSTRIA**
Dr. Thomas G. Hirschmann

**BELGIUM**
Michael Haefner

**CANADA**
Scott Payne, Barry Birch, Alan Matheson, Ben Weaver, Britton C. Smith, Barry Bannatyne

**GERMANY**
Lars Schinnerling

**IRELAND**
Paul Hennessey, Chris Hitchcock, Derek Perkins

**SPAIN**
Francisco Franch

**THE NETHERLANDS**
Frans van der Kolff

**UNITED KINGDOM**
Nicholas Morrison, Frank Startup, Geoff White, Alan Bostock, Jason Liddiard, Tom Wallace, Ken Brown, Bob Halls, Ken Heason, Jill Enno, Ken Shaw, John Popey, Frank Thompson, Trevor Grasby, John R Byrd, Roger Addey, Michael O'Donoghue, Doreen C Hubbard, Geoff L Robinson, Leslie Woods, L Bates, Gillian Stenning, Brenda Sellers, Des Cusack, Ian Patience, John Stiles, Peter Hawkins, Michael J Reynolds, Anna Monaghan, Gill McKee, Charles Wilkinson, Margaret North, Mike Mansley, John E. Cooper, Jonathan Cook, John Walton, George Patmore, Bernie Hemsley, Bert Hamblet, Bert Bishop

**UNITED STATES**
Eugene Roberts, Richard Shoemaker, Elisa Van Riper, Bob Bamberger, Samuel Ingham, Laurence Kieran, Paul Murphy, Robert Ferguson, Stanley Diebel, Edwin Putzell, Michael Keiser, Richard Ryan, Dale Theilker, Kurt Schroeder, William Chrzan, James Cowley, Howard Crosby, James Determan, Wayne Stankowski, Wayne Sharnick, Judy Schmid, Thomas Chuey, Gary Giddins, Roy Ezell, William Hunt, Greg van Beek, Michael Welly, Anton Garcia-Fernandez, Laurence Doyle, Benjamin Whitely, James Vettori, Carl Riesinger, Cliff Brisbois, Stephen Russell, Ralph Morris, Richard Rubenstein, Joseph Groom, Jeffrey Freeman, David Currie, Sally Monaghan, Roger Schore, William Franklin, Sean Joyce, Mary Quinn, Crissi Newton, David Lobosco, Michael Martin, Robert Pettix, Dave Richardson, Kenneth Winters, Stuart Chadde, Kyle Hufstedler, Nancy Lenner, Ron McBride, Theresa Cretella, Phillip Turtle, Louis Aragola, James Palumbo, Dennis Rogers, Gary Meissler, Bill Fowler, Robby Robertson, John Holland, Jeffrey Geist, Chris Hammond, Edward Norris, Stanley Lebby, Preston Schlueter, William Galleta, Reagan Harper, Anthony DiFlorio, Mike Isaacson, Dave Foe, William Stimson, Paul Barstow, Jonas Hartzler, Robert Beaver, Joseph Clay, Greg Hammond, Theodore Freeman, James Marturano, Edward Press, Lee Spilberg, John Newton, Mike Reilly, Walter Raubicheck.

## THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

**INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR 12 MONTHS TO 31st DECEMBER 2019**

| Income | £ | Expenditure | £ |
|---|---|---|---|
| Subscriptions | 8,170 | Production of BING Magazine | 8,856 |
| Donations | 3,208 | Secretarial Costs | 274 |
| Gwen Harvey Legacy | 53 | CDs - Costs | 740 |
| Sales – CDs | 634 | | |
| Sales – Books | 96 | ICC Web Page / Domain Name | 102 |
| | | Book postage | 9 |
| Bank Balance 31/12/2018 | 9,230 | Bank Balance 31/12/2019 | 11,410 |
| | 21,391 | | 21,391 |

**Note:**
1. The accounts are a simple unaudited Income and Expenditure summary. Amounts owing and stocks of books and CDs held are not shown. Funds held on a temporary basis by the various international representatives are not shown either.
2. The club will be able to cover its anticipated expenditure in 2020.

**Michael Crampton. Secretary/Treasurer**

## Deaths

We are sorry to record the loss of **Hazel Nunn** (Bass Hill, New South Wales, Australia) and **Charles Lemieux** (Oak Park, Illinois, USA). Hazel and Charles were enthusiastic members of the club both contributing gifts over many years. To their family and friends we extend our sincere condolences.

## Bing Crosby on CD

This is my usual reminder that the following single CDs remain available from me.

Costs as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| **UK** | **£7.50** |
| **Europe** | **£9.50** |
| **Rest of the world** | **£10.50** |

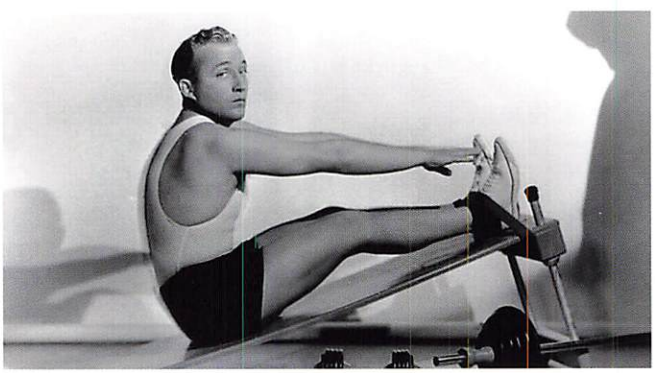
The price for the double CD is:

| | |
|---|---|
| **UK** | **£9.50** |
| **Ireland & Europe** | **£11.50** |
| **Rest of the world** | **£15** |

Members in the US and Canada should obtain their copies from Perry Huntoon and in Australia/New Zealand from David Currington.

- **BING CROSBY – THROUGH THE YEARS – Vol 10**
- **BING CROSBY and the Kraft Music Hall – Rare Original Survivors**
- **BING CROSBY Entertains for Woodbury Soap**
- **BING CROSBY – GOOD AND RARE VOL 3.**
- **BING CROSBY – HOLIDAY IN EUROPE (and beyond)**
- **JOIN BING & SING ALONG (2 CD SET)**

**Michael Crampton** *mdcrampton@gmail.com*



*(Editor: Our sincere thanks to Michael for making the long trip to the USA at his own expense for Wig's funeral. The family published the following obituary.)*

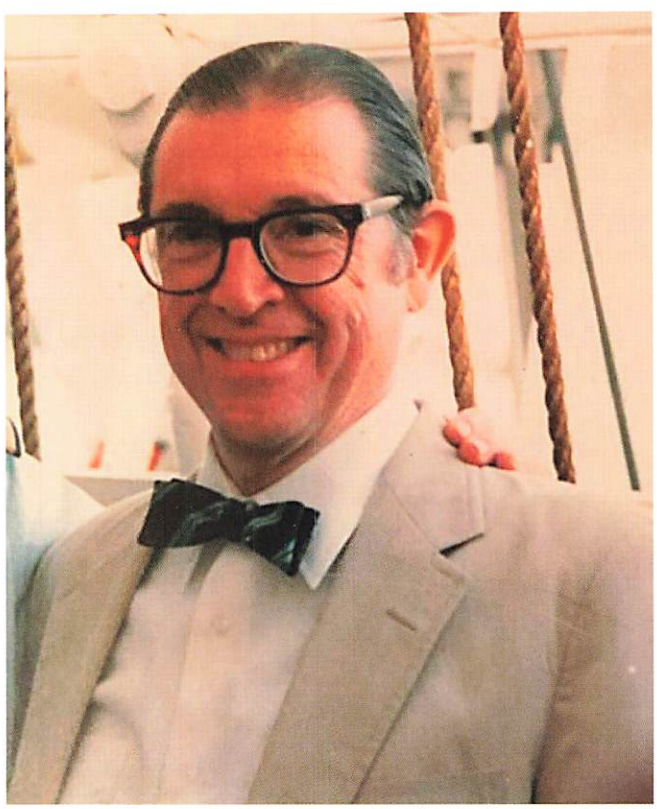
# Frontis Burbank Wiggins Jr.

**APRIL 7, 1929 – OCTOBER 29, 2019**

Frontis Burbank (Wig) Wiggins, Jr., retired Foreign Service Officer and internationally recognized Bing Crosby expert, died on October 29, 2019, at his home in Arlington, Virginia at the age of 90.

He was born in Thomasville, Georgia, on April 7, 1929 to Frontis Burbank and Emma Louise (King) Wiggins and grew up in Albany, Georgia, where his father owned a small business. After earning an Industrial Engineering degree from Georgia Tech (1950), he attended the University of Birmingham, England, on a Rotary Club scholarship, leaving in 1951 with a Graduate Commerce (MBA) degree plus lifelong friendships with fellow students and a permanent disgust for Brussels sprouts. While working for Standard Oil in Baton Rouge in 1952, he was called to naval service. After the Korean War he entered the University of California at Berkeley on the GI Bill, earning a 1956 Master of Political Science for his thesis on the election dispute that in 1946 briefly left Georgia with 3 simultaneous governors.

He entered the Foreign Service in 1956 and served his country at home and abroad for nearly 35 years. His first posts were Kenya and Guatemala, followed by Indonesia, where in 1960 he married an Embassy colleague, Laura Ponnone of Farmington, Connecticut, and where their daughter Joanne was born. His next post, Italy, was the birthplace of his son, Frontis Burbank III. His next overseas appointment was Deputy Chief of Mission (and frequent Chargé d'Affaires) for Malta. After serving on, then heading, the Board of Examiners (which selects new Foreign Service officers), his final post was U.S. Consul for Brisbane, Australia. He retired in 1991.



He loved music of all kinds, from Hot Jazz and the Weavers to opera and Broadway, but his favorite by far was Bing Crosby. He was a serious collector, serving for decades as the American Representative for the International Club Crosby. He developed enduring friendships with Bing enthusiasts all over the world and contributed to the preservation of Crosby's musical legacy. His encouragement sustained John McNicholas' mission to issue all Bing's recordings via the Chronological Bing Crosby, AKA the Jonzo Series. In 2015, he and co-author Jim Reilly published "The Definitive Bing Crosby Discography: From 78s to CDs." He was invited by MCA records to edit a series of re-issues of Bing' recordings, and he selected the music for over a dozen CDs featuring Bing's wide range, including 21 gold records, Hawaiian, Irish, and Western songs, and of course Christmas music, the genre Bing pioneered. He was also closely involved with Hofstra University's 2002 "Bing! Crosby and American Culture" conference.

He lost his wife Laura in 2007 after 47 years of devoted partnership. He is survived by his brother, James Marvin (Adele Cooke), of Glen Eden Beach, Oregon, his daughter, Joanne (Shelley Platt), of Richmond, and his son, Frontis Burbank III, and grandson, Frontis Burbank (Primo) IV, of Fairfax

*(Editor: Amongst the many members who wrote expressing their sorrow were:*

**Bob Phillips**

I first met Wig Wiggins in Pittsburgh in 2010 at the showing of the Pittsburgh Pirates 1960 World Series movie found in Bing's basement. We both were invited by the Crosby family. Wig was much admired by them and helped them with Bing's history and his music. I am the last person left from Bing Crosby Enterprises who worked on his radio show and the invention of the video tape recorder.

It turned out that we both lived in Northern Virginia, and we got together when we returned from Pittsburgh. Wig was a great collector of Bing's music and other material, and I lived through a period that Wig and other collectors were trying to understand. It was a good match. When I left Crosby in 1957, I went into telecommunications and my Crosby experience faded into the background.

Over the years Wig and I would meet for lunch or some event, and he would get me to tell my stories about Bing. I never thought much about them until Wig would tell me that it was information about Bing that the Crosby collectors were missing. He would encourage me to write about my experiences and submit them to *BING* magazine. Wig brought back to me one of the great periods of my life.

During the last months our lunches consisted of bringing him some special food that he wanted. We would sit around his dining room table and tell Bing stories. It was a special place with all the Crosby recordings, movies, books and other memorabilia surrounding us, interspersed with photographs of his family, his other love. Wig was retired from the US State Department, which sent him throughout the world on diplomatic assignments. I also traveled overseas, and we found still another bond.

I know Wig will be missed by the International Club Crosby to which he dedicated much of his time through the years. The Crosby family also will miss him as will my wife and me for he has kept Bing's legacy alive for all of us. Our thanks go out to his family for sharing him with us.

**Jon Oye**

Wig was an unassuming force of nature in promoting Bing's legacy and keeping his name and music in the public eye. Though it's been awhile since our last conversation, we spoke many times on the phone over the years, and I'll miss his informed insights and warm, Southern gentleman's accent. He (and his delightful wife, Laura, before she passed away) always asked about our children and would comment on how much they'd grown from one year to the next in our Christmas card photos. He once used his influence with Andy McKaie to persuade Universal to use my pencil portrait of Bing for the cover of the *Bing's Gold Records CD* (unbeknownst to me until just before it was released—a very pleasant surprise), as well as using it for the cover of his essential Bing discography and on the promotional material for the Hofstra conference. A retired member of the U.S. State Department, Wig was the ultimate ambassador for Bing, and put his heart and soul into keeping Bing's memory alive. He was a unique person and, needless to say, will be sorely missed.

**Alan Matheson**

Wig was a wonderful person and such a staunch supporter of the ICC. I was lucky to speak with him many times via the phone and valued every conversation I had with him.

**Michael McCrann**

Very sad news. He was such a great Bing fan and helped a lot of us in joining the parade. He will be missed.

**Jeremy Rose**

What very, very sad news... Unfortunately, I never had the pleasure of meeting Wig, but he was obviously a giant of the Crosby community and will be sadly missed.

**Jack Boyle**

Prayers, thoughts and sincerest condolences for this fine gentleman and fellow Club member, who did so much to promote Bing's legacy and music history through the years. May God Bless him richly as he enters his new life.

**Ron Field**

Sad news indeed. Wig did so much for the Crosby cause. He is probably having a 'wee dram' with Bing already.

**Maureen Solomon**

I am glad it was peaceful, but there are so many losses these days. I am sorry for his family and the loss they suffer now. He was always there for everyone. He was a treasure.....life is just TOO short.

**Judy Schmid**

What an accomplished man…I'll miss our chats.

*(Editor: So many people wrote in tribute to Wig and I have just had to pick out a few at random. We shall all miss Wig, and Crosbyana has indeed suffered a sad and huge loss.)*

# Bing Back in the Charts

We've already mentioned that Bing was back in the UK charts and later on in this issue Graham Pascoe will tell us about Bing returning to the lists in Australia too. Further down the UK album charts were Bing's albums "Christmas Classics" (at No. 69) and at No. 84 was "Bing Crosby - The Voice of Christmas: The Complete Decca Christmas Songbook".

In the USA, Bing was also in Billboard's Artist 100 for a while with a peak position of No. 8. This placed him ahead of Michael Buble, Sinatra, Andy Williams, Nat King Cole, The Beatles, Ed Sheeran, Ariana Grande, Elvis Presley and a lot more. The Billboard Artist 100 chart combines performances across the Hot 100 chart, the Billboard 200 album chart, and the Internet-centric Social 50 chart (a ranking of the most active artists on the world's leading social networking sites).

On other charts, the *Rolling Stone* magazine Artists 500 chart ranks the most-streamed artists of the week in the United States, taking into account audio streams across an artist's entire catalog during the tracking period. The chart does not include passive listening such as terrestrial radio or digital radio. The Artists 500 is updated daily, and each week *Rolling Stone* finalizes and publishes an official version of the chart, covering the seven-day period ending with the previous Thursday.

The Christmas period caused a few interesting shake-ups in the Top 10 of the Artists 500. On December 26, Bing was at No. 7 (79.5 million streams!), Michael Bublé at eight (77.9 million) and a cappella outfit Pentatonix at number 10 (74.7 million).

Also the Rolling Stone Top 200 Albums chart ranks the most popular albums from today's most popular artists. Albums are ranked by Album Units, a number that combines digital and physical album sales, digital song sales and audio streams, using a custom weighting system. The albums chart does not include any passive listening like radio airplay or digital radio. Bing's "White Christmas" album hit number six on the Top 200, moving 60,800 album units, while Bublé's Christmas was at number seven on the same chart with 58,900 album units, and The Best of Pentatonix Christmas hit number nine, moving 53,100 album units.

These are truly incredible figures and very pleasing indeed to see, but sadly the artists concerned do not receive much in the way of royalties. Napster, the king of streaming music payouts, now pays out only $0.019 per stream. To meet the monthly minimum wage amount in the US ($1,472), an artist needs 77,474 total plays. Spotify for instance only pays whoever holds the rights to a song anywhere from $0.006 to $0.0084 per play. The rights "holder" can then split these earnings between the record label, producers, artists, and songwriters, which means splitting pennies between many parties. Historically, YouTube hasn't ever been an artist-friendly platform either, thanks to its horrendous payouts. It pays artists a miserly $0.00069. To earn the monthly minimum wage amount in the US, artists need around 2,133,333 total plays on YouTube. It's easy to understand why singers go on concert tours nowadays because it seems to be the only way to earn big money from their recordings.

# Bing's Letters to US Soldiers

**One of the many clever ideas used to publicise the "Bing at Christmas" CD was discussed by James Hall writing in the British Daily Telegraph on November 21.**

*Bing Crosby, White Christmas and the touching letters he sent to US soldiers. Shown here for the first time, the singer's letters show his unique contribution to the war effort.*

In early 1946 Private Aaron Stockton, a young American soldier serving with the 77th Infantry Division in the Pacific after the Second World War, received a letter. The address in its top left-hand corner, printed in an elaborate copperplate, matched the status of its sender: Bing Crosby, National Broadcasting Company, Hollywood.

"Dear Aaron," the entertainer wrote, "Enjoyed hearing from you, and was happy to learn that you latched on to White Christmas in your remote spot. Warmest personal regards – and with the hope that you'll be on your way home soon. Take care of yourself. Regards, Bing Crosby."

The letter was one of hundreds that Crosby, who was America's biggest star at the time, wrote and received during and after the war. As well as corresponding with troops, he'd write to their families too, acting as comforter, intermediary and morale-booster following regular trips to sing for servicemen in Europe.

The cache of letters – many of which reference Crosby's most famous song – was discovered in a box in the attic of the Crosby family home in Hillsborough, California, around a decade ago. They are published here for the first time.

At 38, Crosby was deemed too old to fight when the US entered the war following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. But Kathryn, the entertainer's widow and second wife (he died in 1977), says he was "deeply patriotic" and realised, as a father of four boys, how homesick the soldiers overseas were. His trips and letters were his way of contributing to the war effort.

"It was a dreadful time for so many of them. The American boys were only out of high school and they'd never travelled. It was awfully frightening and he just loved to be there with them," Kathryn, 85, tells me.

Crosby's letters were personal and detailed, going far beyond the platitudes you might expect from a celebrity. In January 1945, for example, Crosby wrote to Mrs Bernadine Hackney in Brooklyn, advising her that "Bud" – presumably her husband or son whom he had met in Europe – had been "reported missing in action somewhere in Belgium".

Crosby, who'd heard the news in a letter from Bud's superior, said it was "most probable" that he was a prisoner of war. "I certainly hope that this is so."

He told Mrs Hackney how he and Bud had talked about horse racing when they'd met and that he'd "enjoyed his company very much".

In another letter, Crosby tells Mrs Phillip Lawler of Pittsburgh that her husband's 79th Division was the "greatest audience I ever faced" when he sang to them in France.

And there was one song the troops desperately wanted

*Bing visits a military hospital in France in 1944*

to hear. Crosby was already a star before the war, having appeared in more than 30 films.

However, White Christmas made him a superstar. By happenstance he'd recorded Irving Berlin's song the week before Pearl Harbor for the film Holiday Inn. He debuted it on Christmas Eve 1941 on the Kraft Music Hall radio show in the US. Success was slow, but the song's lyrics about dreaming of an ideal, snowy Christmas "like the ones I used to know" resonated with troops overseas listening on Armed Forces Radio.

Despite his fame, Crosby became their relatable everyman. The following November, boosted by demand from jukeboxes in foreign USO halls and from soldiers' families, White Christmas reached number one in the US charts. By Christmas 1942 it had sold two million copies.

It topped the US singles chart for the following six Christmases. The winsome ballad about a mythical Christmas of yore – a song that didn't mention war – had become US servicemen's nostalgic comfort blanket. Kathryn says it made them think of just one thing: home.

"They wanted to make the bad things go away… All of us want to be home for Christmas," says Kathryn. The song encapsulates the desire for a "simpler, easier, kinder" life; the desire to "cook, celebrate and decorate the tree", she says. "After a while they all wanted White Christmas," says Kathryn of the troops.

A letter to Crosby dated October 1944 from a Mrs Alice Bratt in Maryland quoted a letter that she'd received from her unnamed brother, who was a "tank man in General Patton's army" to whom Crosby had sung.

"White Christmas was the last song on our program and here's hoping we'll be on our way home then. He (Bing) sure is a morale builder," Mrs Bratt's brother had written. She signed off her letter to the entertainer by saying: "God bless you, Bing, for giving our boys a taste of home."

Her brother's wishes were in vain. Two months after Mrs Bratt wrote, General Patton's Third Army was involved in the Battle of the Bulge on the Western Front, in which US forces suffered 75,000 casualties. One of the bloodiest battles of the Second World War raged on over Christmas. It is not known whether Mrs Bratt's brother survived.

In total, Crosby spent an estimated 25 weeks entertaining servicemen in Europe. He relished the inherent risk ("He said that the soldiers were in danger, [so] why not him?") but also the moments of levity, says Kathryn, who met Crosby in the mid-Fifties and married him in 1957.

"During the London fog [on one visit], he'd just done a show at the soldiers' canteen. Fred Astaire was there; they both sang. Then he went out – I think he had had a drink or two – and he wound up crawling up the street because it was so foggy," she says. Back at his hotel, a crowd gathered beneath his balcony. The police urged him to sing as a carrot for them to disperse. "So he stood on his balcony and sang Ave Maria to them a cappella."

White Christmas has since become the biggest single of all time, selling more than 50 million copies. Over the decades it has been repurposed in strange ways: it was the US military's secret symbol for soldiers to evacuate Saigon during the Vietnam War. Last Christmas Day alone it was streamed 18 million times. But the song has never reached number one in the UK. Kathryn hopes that a reworked version featuring Bing's original vocals over a new arrangement by the London Symphony Orchestra, released tomorrow on the Bing at Christmas album, will top this year's Christmas chart. It would, she says, mean "a great deal".

With its ubiquity, did Bing ever tire of the song? After all, he reportedly once said that "a jackdaw with a cleft palate could have sung it successfully".

"He liked it very much," insists Kathryn, who was an actress 30 years Bing's junior. She herself played a role in the White Christmas story. She, Bing's and their children, Harry, Mary and Nathaniel, appeared in his TV Christmas specials that ran from 1961 to the year he died.

Dressed in festive regalia, they'd sing to audiences of millions. I ask her to describe Christmas Day in the Crosby household. Surely even the most perfect Christmas can't have lived up to the idyllic imagery conjured by White Christmas. To be fair, it sounds pretty close.

She talks of large family gatherings, of football in the back yard, of cooking and gossiping, and of Bing dancing an Irish jig. Did he ever croon White Christmas to them privately? "All the time," she says.

And what was he like as a husband in general? Accounts of his first marriage to actress Dixie Lee have suggested that, despite the warm image we have of Crosby, he could be cold and remote, and a strict disciplinarian to his and Lee's four sons. "He was very kind," says Kathryn. "We never had an argument. He was very quiet, very dear, and loved making fun with the children. He loved taking Harry duck hunting, he took Nathaniel golfing. He took Mary and me to Africa on a couple of safaris." She says he was strict with his first family because "his wife was afraid to discipline" the children.

One other thing that happened without fail every Christmas in the Crosby home was that the telephone would ring. "Irving Berlin called Bing every Christmas to say, 'Congratulations, we've done it again'," Kathryn says. But, as these extraordinary letters attest, the song's commercial success was a by-product of something far more profound. Its three sentimental minutes provided a shared musical touchstone for soldiers and families thousands of miles apart. White Christmas became their wartime national anthem.

It gave them hope – often so tragically misplaced – that they'd be on their way home soon.

**James Hall**

*(Editor: All of the British newspapers covered the new album and the Daily Mail had a major article by Chrissy Iley on November 15 featuring Bing's daughter, Mary. Here are some extracts.)*

# The Real Father Christmas? My Dad, Bing Crosby

Bing Crosby is the King of Christmas. His festive TV shows were legendary, with his whole family sitting round the tree and singing, and his version of White Christmas, the Christmas anthem, has been streamed more than 1.8 billion times.

For his daughter Mary though, who was 18 when Bing died in 1977 and went on to star as Kristin Shepard in the hit TV show Dallas, Christmas has been a bittersweet time ever since.

'It's when I miss him the most, but then I see how much pleasure he still gives people and that would have thrilled him,' she says.

'After he died, I'd go into the shopping mall and hear his voice everywhere. It made me miss him so much, but it also made me happy that he was still part of Christmas.'

He will be giving out pleasure again this year with new album Bing At Christmas, a collection of 14 of his best-loved Christmas songs, including Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas, Let It Snow! and It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas.

Bing's original vocals have been luxuriously remastered and the songs re-arranged with a beautiful blend of strings and swing courtesy of The London Symphony Orchestra.

'Our family is so excited,' says Mary. 'On this album Dad's voice is crystal clear and the orchestra is just the best. It's magical.'

Mary, who lives in Malibu, is now 60 and looks elegant today. She is actually part of Bing's second family.

His first wife, actress Dixie Lee, died in 1952 and their four boys, who have all since passed away, were grown up by the time Bing married Mary's mother, actress and singer Kathryn Grant.

She and Bing went on to have three children, Mary and her brothers Harry and Nathaniel, and it was they who supplied the cosy festive cheer in those Christmas shows.

'Everyone gets one Christmas, but we got two because we filmed the shows in October or November,' says Mary.

'I always felt very lucky. It was fun to be together as a family and each year there was someone wonderful to perform with. There was no formal rehearsing, just us sitting around the breakfast table to come up with the songs we'd sing that year. It was about hanging out together.

'We weren't spoilt. We didn't get extravagant gifts, just what normal kids got. Both my parents felt strongly about that. Every year we'd make ornaments for the tree, often with photos of us from school pictures, so our Christmas trees were historical – we could watch

*Mary Crosby (centre) with her family in Bing's 1971 Christmas Show*

ourselves grow up.

'On Christmas Day we'd go to Mass because my dad was a very staunch Catholic, then my mum, who's from Texas, would make biscuits [a bit like British scones] and quail – cooking wasn't her strong suit but we all liked this Texan tradition – and then we'd open presents. But we didn't do singing on Christmas day.

'I've always thought family rituals are such a gift. Christmas was always about being at home together. It wasn't about the presents, there was no excessive consumption. We grew up with a great value system.

'The Christmas shows were all about the spirit of Christmas, not religion. Even though Dad was a devout Catholic, it was important to him to communicate with everyone.

'He liked to make people happy. He was not just an extraordinary singer, he was also known as a one-take guy. Studio musicians loved him because they were not going to be there until midnight.

'He'd sing the song and it'd be done. He wanted to be there for our family. There was a lot going on with his first family, and he wanted to do things differently with us. I'm very grateful for that.'

'We got an incredible amount of time with him,' says Mary. 'He didn't know what to do with me, as the only

girl, so he taught me how to hunt, which was fantastic. Mum home-schooled us and we'd spend April to May in a house Dad built in Mexico.

'He tried to teach me how to shoot as well, but that was when he realised I was a girl and more interested in hanging out with him, so we did lots of fishing on boats instead. He was also a cowboy, a great horseman, so I grew up riding too.'

Sport, in particular baseball and golf, had always been Bing's true passion and he was keen to pass this on to Mary.

'He always said he was a golfer who could carry a tune,' she laughs. 'When we went to Mexico he'd bring a load of bats and balls and give them out to the locals in the middle of nowhere, and me, my dad and the fishermen would play ball.'

She must have realised her father was an icon when she was little?

'I think children know everything intuitively. People treated my dad differently because there was something special about him, but to me he was just Dad. We were raised outside of Hollywood, near San Francisco, because it was important to him that we had a normal upbringing.

'Our upbringing was the opposite of his first family. He was with us the whole time so although we didn't have him for as many years, we had all of him. They led a very showbiz life, but with us there was no excess, although family friends such as Frank Sinatra and Fred Astaire came over.

'I was starstruck by Fred because I was an overweight ballerina! One downside of growing up was that kids would sing White Christmas to me in June, but we had a quiet life.

'Dad wasn't a Hollywood party person. He took Bob Hope out on a three-day fishing trip, and Bob said, 'I want to go home.' Dad said, 'Why?' and Bob replied, 'Because fish don't applaud.' Dad loved an audience but he didn't need one.

'Another thing about him is he'd never watch his own movies. We loved Holiday Inn and White Christmas, but we never watched them with Dad. It wasn't modesty:

*Mary Crosby appearing on The One Show in December*

he'd done it and that was that. White Christmas is a big part of the season for many people, but he didn't watch it every year.'

In 1974 Bing was struck down by a lung infection that almost killed him and forced him into semi-retirement. He returned to the stage in 1977, embarking on a concert tour of Britain, recording that last Christmas special with David Bowie while over here.

'He loved England's golf courses, and when he decided to go back on stage, he did it at the London Palladium with his dear friend Rosemary Clooney,' says Mary.

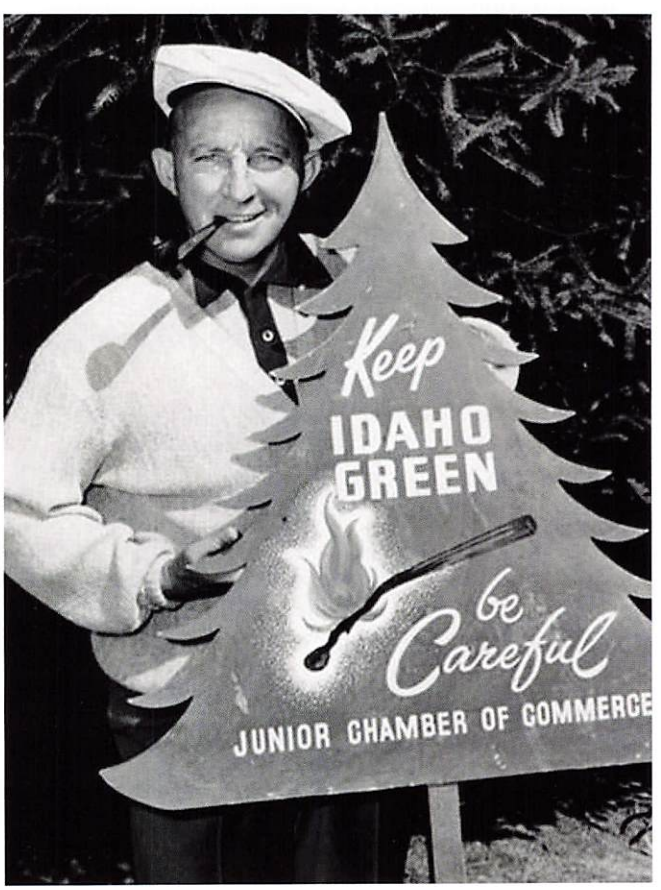
'I remember entering his dressing room and asking if he was nervous. He looked over his newspaper and said, 'Nervous? There's nothing to be nervous about.'

There wasn't even a bit of angst, that was part of his draw. He made everything seem easy and happy. My mum says, 'Women loved him and men wanted to be him.' He was so comfortable in his own skin.'

His final concert was at the Brighton Centre on 10 October 1977, four days before his death. From Britain he flew to Spain to play golf and hunt partridge, but after playing near Madrid he suffered a massive heart attack on his way back to the clubhouse, aged 74.

'He died after 18 holes, impeccable timing,' says Mary. 'He was in great shape, very sporty, and he didn't have a heart condition that we knew of. These days it probably wouldn't have been fatal. Eighteen is a terrible age to lose your dad, but I'm grateful for the fun we had.'....

**Chrissy Iley**



# White Christmas Crooner's Son Harry on Family Disputes and THAT Song

**Next it was Harry Crosby's turn to put some focus on the new CD. Deborah Collcutt writing in the British Daily Express on December 9 had this to say.**

CHRISTMAS Day is planned to perfection. Preparations don't start too early – traditionally in mid-December – but no detail is too small to be considered. From the meticulously-selected Christmas tree decorations to the lunch menu of baked ham, everything is just right.

The highlight of the day is a rendition of Christmas songs, performed live by the children for assembled friends and family. All hardly surprising, perhaps, given the household in question is that of Bing Crosby's son Harry, whose late father's name encapsulates the magic of Christmas as much as Santa Claus himself. Bing's grandchildren even perform their grandpa's world-famous song White Christmas every year in tribute to the master crooner. "My son, Nicholas, and daughter, Thea, sing and play White Christmas on the piano for everyone," says Harry, who lives in New York.

"We have friends round and some years my mom and sister are here from California. It's an important tradition, a mainstay of Christmas Day."

Harry, 61, continues: "It's funny, I used to cringe at the idea of playing my father's music but not now. People really love it – it's a sustainable thing."

Nearly 80 years after its 1942 release, White Christmas remains the world's biggest-selling single – a whopping 50 million copies globally. Unsurprisingly, it remains a staple of radio and in-store music playlists over the festive season.

Now it is back in the Top 10 after 40 years and on course for a Christmas Number One after a new album, Bing at Christmas, a remastered recording with the London Symphony Orchestra, was released last month.

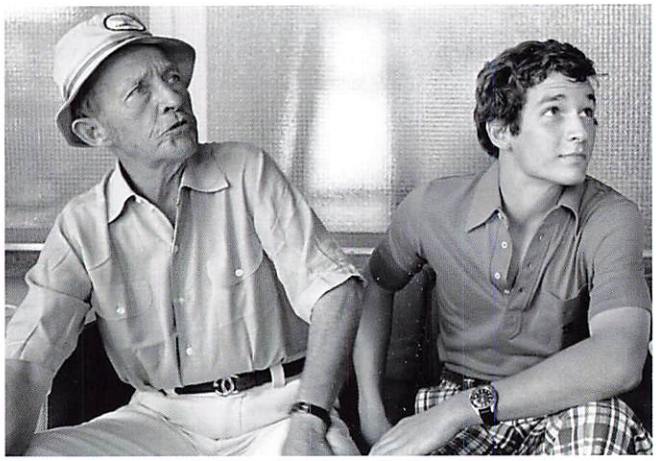
And the family is making a concerted effort to keep Bing's memory alive and introduce him to new audiences. To that end, they are in talks about a dramatisation of his life, along the lines of hit series The Crown on Netflix.

Harry explains: "The estate in partnership with Universal Pictures, which is helping us promote and push it forward, is looking at a series like The Crown exploring who my father was.

**"What we would like to do is a Netflix multi-hour series to tell the story.** Think about diversity in today's world. My father was a supporter of Louis Armstrong, who came against resistance.

"My father facilitated his ability to get exposure and access and they were great friends and partners."

Harry was just 19 when his famous father died aged 74 on a golf course in Spain. At the time, Harry had been performing with Bing and singer Rosemary Clooney, aunt of movie star George, on an international tour, which had started in Britain.



*Harry with his Dad*

"We had played several shows at the Palladium in London and were due to tour Japan and Australia but Dad wasn't feeling well," recalls Harry, who had classical training in piano, composition and orchestration.

"He terminated the tour because he wasn't feeling up for stuff, travelling for six months over the world."

Father and son closed the tour in Brighton on October 10, 1977 – Dame Gracie Fields was there to see the show – then went their separate ways. It was the last time Harry would see his father alive.

"I had just turned 19 and I decided to go back to school. I applied to Rada (Royal Academy of Dramatic Art) and Lamda (London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art) to major in theatre and music but they were full up. The school year had started.

"I invited the dean of Lamda to come and see me perform at the Palladian with my dad. I sang a duet with Rosemary and I sang alone. Afterwards he said, 'Start Monday!'

So I went to school during the day and performed with dad at night. I didn't go out of my way to tell people who my dad was.

My objective was to assimilate as part of the group. But, of course, I couldn't join them for a pint in the pub in the evenings because I was performing, plus Dad and I were living in an apartment in Mayfair."

So Bing, who had been in generally good health according to his son, went to Spain on his own to play golf. Harry believes his father never recovered after falling off the stage seven months earlier at his 50th anniversary concert in California.

Having toppled 30 feet into the orchestra pit and ruptured a disc in his back, he spent a month in the hospital. In Spain, four days after their last concert, Bing collapsed and died of a massive heart attack at the end of his first day's game of golf.

Harry, the only family member in Europe, had to fly home to California with his father's body.

There his mother, Bing's second wife, actress Kathryn Grant, now 86, his actress sister, Mary, and young brother Nathaniel, an amateur golfer, were waiting. After the funeral, Harry returned to Britain to continue his studies.

"Certainly at that time I didn't feel guilty that I wasn't with him – you can't change the outcome of things – but you grow up quickly when you lose a parent that young," he says.

"Dad and I had a really strong relationship, both professionally and personally. As a father and a son, we were exceptionally close."

Harry remains deeply saddened by ¬comments made by his late half-brother, Gary – Bing's eldest son from his first marriage to actress and nightclub singer, Dixie Lee – after their father's death.

In a highly critical memoir, Going My Own Way, Gary depicted Bing as cruel, cold, remote, and physically and psychologically abusive.

Bing's other sons from that marriage, Lindsay and Dennis, who both killed themselves, in 1989 and 1991 respectively, and Phillip, largely distanced themselves from Gary's criticism although they never denied Bing could be a stern disciplinarian.

But it is a description that Harry does not recognise. "I don't know where it came from. I only know my own experience with my dad which was one of love, support, friendship and respect," he says.

"My dad never pushed us into music or entertainment – we were exposed to it and I loved working together.

"We went fishing together and golfing and he was able to impart on us not just that we were loved but also the rules of the road – the way to behave. So I was sad to read those things."

But there have been disputes between Bing's two families dating back to Dixie's death from cancer in 1952 when she left her share of their estate in trust to her sons.

Bing left his estate to Kathryn, and HLC Properties, Ltd was formed to manage his interests. In 1999, the families settled a dispute over the estates for a reported £1.2million. Now Harry and descendants of his half-siblings no longer see each other.

"It's sad. I wish we did but we were raised in a different town and we never did see much of each other because of the age difference.

"When I was five, Gary was 20 *(sic – Gary was 30)*. That's a big gap. We're a tight family. We did our own stuff," says Harry.

While Bing dedicated his life to singing – he didn't play an instrument, apart from drums early on in his career – he also helped develop recording equipment so artists didn't always have to perform live to preserve their voices.

After Bing's death, Harry went into banking.

He studied business after a spell writing jingles for commercials but he maintains a passionate interest in music and he and his Croatian wife, Mihaela, support the performing arts Lincoln Center in New York.

These days, Harry plays at home for pleasure with Nicholas, 15, and Thea, 11, and loves the anonymity living in New York affords him.

*Harry Crosby with his family*

"Mihaela is from Zagreb and her background is in microbiology," he says.

"It was a joy she didn't know who my father was," laughs Harry.

"When we met, she said, 'I love the fact your dad likes music, like you. Can I meet him?'"

The Crosby and Clooney families remain close although Harry hasn't seen George for some time.

Now Harry is preparing to start his Christmas shopping, always a poignant moment because it means going into a mall where a certain song is always playing.

But while his younger sister Mary, says she found White Christmas heartbreaking to listen to after their father's death, it's always been a pleasure for Harry.

"It's always wonderful to hear, it makes me feel good," he says. "Mind you Little Drummer Boy is great, too."

Bing recorded the latter as a duet with David Bowie in London a month before he died for a television - special, Bing Crosby's Merrie Olde Christmas, which was to be his last. It was broadcast posthumously on Christmas Eve 1977.

"They just banged it out. They were going to cover it as a duet and then it turned into a single," says Harry.

"They barely rehearsed but they were both such pros and of course they had a lot of respect for each other."

But if he had to choose one festive single to save from the waves on a desert island? "White Christmas. Absolutely. Game over."

**Deborah Collcutt**

*(Editor: A Netflix series about Bing! That would be wonderful and I do hope it comes off. One newspaper that had a slightly different approach was The Times and in its' Saturday Review on December 14, Andrew Billen penned this excellent article.)*

# Why we're all Still Dreaming of a White Christmas

Just like Irving Berlin and Bing Crosby, I am in Los Angeles dreaming of a white Christmas. Even though the most snow that has fallen in downtown LA came to just two inches, this is no paradox. The sleigh bells in White Christmas, the song written by Berlin and sung into legend by Crosby, are like the nightingales in Berkeley Square or the bluebirds (that is, American thrushes) over the white cliffs of Dover: longed for, but not present.

For the Siberian-born composer and the crooner from Spokane, a city in Washington state where this year snow fell in September, the song must have been an acknowledgment of how far, by the song's release in 1942, they had come. For 16 million American servicemen, who adopted it as a seasonal anthem, it was surely a reminder of how far they had yet to go.

With 58 million copies sold worldwide, Crosby's White Christmas is the bestselling single to date; 77 years on, it's streamed 18 million times each Christmas Day. It has now been rereleased on an album called Bing at Christmas, in which Crosby's vocals and those to 12 other yuletide hearth-pleasers are orchestrated against arrangements by the London Symphony Orchestra.

Crosby's three surviving children, Mary, Harry and Nathaniel, see the album as an opportunity to right an old wrong, the scandal that White Christmas never topped the charts in Britain.

"Well, that's your fault," says Mary Crosby, in the cramped Wilshire Boulevard offices of Bing Crosby Enterprises. "That's on you. Write a good article. I hold you fully responsible for how this does."

Out of seven Crosby children, Mary is Bing's only daughter, born 60 years ago to his second wife, Kathryn (who aged 86 is still around, having survived a car crash nine years ago that killed the man she married after Bing). The actress jokes that she wished she had inherited her father's blue eyes and his voice, but instead got his nose, which does disservice to our memories of her as Kristin Shepard, the Dallas vixen who in 1980 shot JR Ewing. Mary says that she enjoys being the answer to a Trivial Pursuit question, but even more bringing up her two boys within a happy marriage at the end of a mountain dirt road in California.

It is a modest life; much, she insists, like her childhood outside San Francisco. Bing never watched his films and rarely spoke about his career. He did not crave approbation. She tells a story that has Bing taking Bob Hope, his co-star in the Road to . . . films, on a three-day fishing expedition around an island off the Californian coast. Their boat returned after a single day. Someone asked why they had come back early.

"And Bob said, 'Fish don't applaud.' Bob needed the applause. Dad really didn't, but one of the things that I would say is that because Dad was incredibly modest and under the radar, we as a family did him a disservice. When he died we just continued under the radar and did nothing about getting his voice out. I think it took us about 20 years to think, 'Oh, we've really done this wrong, because nobody knows who Bing Crosby is except around Christmas.' And then that was when we found Robert."

Robert Bader is in the office with us, fact-checking Mary's memories, these being, because Bing died when she was 18, necessarily limited. He is the vice-president of Bing Crosby Enterprises and an expert on Groucho Marx, who has become the devoted archivist, restorer and guardian of Crosby's works and reputation. He is obviously delighted with Bing at Christmas.

I ask if the Crosby business is making money. "I don't know that it's going to pay back all the digitising, but it's getting close," he says. "Look, it's a business; that's why they call it the music business. This material doesn't preserve itself. So I don't feel any shame about commercialising any of it."

"Basically, the heavy lifting is all Robert," Mary says. And Bing's and Berlin's, of course. Berlin, who over his 60-year career wrote about 1,500 songs, brought White Christmas to his office in New York in January 1940. He told his chief orchestrator, Helmy Kresa, to take down not only the best song he had ever written, but "the best song anybody ever wrote". While it is likely he had completed the song at home in New York that weekend, when and where he started it is disputed. Berlin's granddaughter Emily Fletcher firmly believes it was written in LA, and that the white Christmases he dreamt of were Manhattan, not Russian.

*With Irving Berlin on the "White Christmas" set*

"He and his family left Russia when he was four," she says. "He was talking about the white Christmases of New York, absolutely. We all think he wrote it in LA, possibly at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel. He certainly started it when he was writing for the film that became Alexander's Ragtime Band [1938] because my grandmother, mother and her sisters were living in New York and he really was missing them.

"He hated being away from them for Christmas and would come back to New York when he was making all the Rogers-Astaire movies in Hollywood. That was one year when he couldn't, and I think that was the year — but I don't want to say for sure — that my mother, grandmother and aunts flew over and surprised him."

The song's lyrics certainly supply some support for the family Los Angeles legend. A verse rarely performed specifically sings of "Beverly Hills, LA" where "the orange and palm tree sway" and of nevertheless "longing to be up north" on December 24.

The world first heard White Christmas on Crosby's NBC radio show, Kraft Music Hall, broadcast from the art deco Radio City of Hollywood on December 25, 1941, 18 days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Earlier that month Crosby had sung it feelingly on the as yet uncompleted film Holiday Inn. His assiduous and thoughtful biographer Gary Giddins writes that on the radio, however, he delivered it "too slowly, with laboured mordent".

In any case, no one noticed. "There was no reaction," Giddins writes. It was only after Holiday Inn, starring Crosby and Fred Astaire, was released in 1942 that things began to change. The film critics largely ignored the number and the studio turned to plugging other songs from the movie, Be Careful, It's My Heart and Abraham, a patriotic number Crosby performs in wince-making blackface. By September, however, White Christmas was outselling both. Number one in every US chart by the end of October, it stayed there for nearly three months.

In an interview in 1974 Crosby put its "immediate and lasting" impact down to its popularity with soldiers far from home, many of whom requested it on forces' radio. Berlin agreed, but noted that unlike most war songs, White Christmas did not make anyone want to go to war. James Kaplan in his excellent book on Berlin notes another oddity: it is a secular song by a Jewish man about a Christian festival. He quotes Philip Roth in Operation Shylock. "God gave Moses the Ten Commandments and then He gave Irving Berlin Easter Parade and White Christmas. The two holidays that celebrate the divinity of Christ . . . and what does Irving Berlin do? He de-Christs them both!"

With tracks including Do You Hear What I Hear? and Little Drummer Boy (a 1977 duet with David Bowie that Crosby sang a month before his death), Bing at Christmas is by no means a secular effort — fittingly, given that Crosby was a life-means-life Catholic. Mary, however, prefers to say the album is really about the spirit of the holiday and "Dad's value system".

That value system has come under scrutiny since Crosby's death. Mary admits that he was an old-fashioned, if not Victorian, father — untactile and, perhaps, unsure of women (the ultimate intimacy with his leading lady, Marjorie Reynolds, in Holiday Inn is a kiss on her cheek).

"His language of love was very subtle. He was of a generation that wasn't excessively, effusively affectionate. But Mom's from Texas and she taught us to crawl all over him. So we would kiss him and make him squirm, and if we were walking on the street and he took my hand, it meant a great deal. But I always knew that I was deeply beloved."

The serious complaints were made after his death by the four sons from Crosby's first unhappy marriage to the nightclub singer Dixie Lee. She had become a difficult alcoholic, but although Crosby considered leaving her he stayed for 22 years, until her death from cancer in 1952. Two of their sons killed themselves, Lindsay putting a gun to his head apparently after watching the film White Christmas on television. All are now dead, but in 1983 the eldest, Gary, wrote a devastating memoir, Going My Own Way, that alleged Bing had humiliated him psychologically and beaten him regularly with a studded belt. The sons additionally insisted that they were not properly provided for in his will, a calumny Bader spends some time dismantling for me.

The second set of Crosby children have their own theory to explain the chronic unhappiness of their half-brothers.

"Nobody understood foetal alcohol syndrome," Mary says. "Dixie drank massively through her pregnancies. The kids were hugely challenged from the get-go. They were always in trouble, and we're not talking rough-housing kid trouble. We're talking about getting thrown out of schools right and left, and violence. It was a train wreck and I'm absolutely sure foetal alcohol syndrome was involved."

*Bing with his four sons from his first marriage*

"The truth," Bader elaborates, "is they had all the symptoms and all the physical signs. You see it in photos where their heads are sort of enlarged and their hands are very small. It's really the classic symptoms."

Crosby died aged 74 on October 14, 1977 after a round of golf in Spain. His final words were: "That was a great game of golf, fellas. Let's get a Coke." It was, all

agree, a good way to go, although it robbed Mary and her brothers, who had performed with their father throughout their childhoods on Christmas TV specials, of the privilege of fully knowing him as adults.

Mary's one-year-elder brother, Harry, an investment banker, got nearest to that. In the summer of 1977 he sang and played the guitar with his father at the London Palladium and on a British tour.

"As I started to follow my own path musically," he tells me by phone from New York, "it was great to have the opportunity to perform both with him and as a solo act, and that's what we did. And then, sadly, we lost him too young. We were together right up until two days before he went to Spain. I was obviously heartbroken. You grow up quickly at the age of 19."

I ask how it feels to hear White Christmas. "Well, it tells me it's that special time of year and it's a wonderful feeling. My dad passed over 40 years ago and I feel in a way a lot closer to him at those times."

And for Mary? "Initially," she says, "for the first ten years, it was bittersweet to hear it, but now it just gives me such joy. It's so incredibly sweet to hear Dad's voice and know he is still the voice of Christmas."

Berlin, born 15 years earlier than Crosby, died 12 years after him in 1989, aged 101. His granddaughter, now a theatre scout, was at drama school in London. "Nobody," Fletcher says, "knew that I was related to him, but we spent the day after he died listening to his music, singing his songs."

The day we talk Fletcher is looking forward to the first night of the new London production of White Christmas, the stage version of the 1954 Crosby film that astutely positions Berlin and Bing's masterpiece within the context of an American platoon fighting in Europe. The Kleenex come out at the end every time she sees it, she says. White Christmas the musical is clearly showing as few signs of mortality as its title song. Perhaps this Christmas we shall, as both families hope, be dreaming of Bing Crosby.

The album Bing at Christmas is out on Decca. The musical White Christmas is on at the Dominion Theatre, London W1 (020 7927 0900), until January 4.

**Andrew Billen**

*(Editor: It's perhaps worth explaining why "White Christmas" has not topped the charts in the UK. As we know, it was issued in 1942 and in the USA it spent 11 weeks at the top of the Billboard charts that year. In 1943 and 1944, it charted at Nos. 6 and 5 respectively but then in 1945 and 1946 it topped the charts again. It charted every year in the States until the early 1960s. So what happened in the UK? Well, the first UK chart covering record sales, as opposed to sheet music sales, was only in November 1952 when the peak years of "White Christmas" sales had passed. However after Bing's death, the record reached No. 5 in 1977 and it popped up briefly in the charts again in 1985 and 1998. If the UK had had record sales charts in the war years, "White Christmas" would have easily been at the top on several occasions.)*

# Calling all Bing Crosbys

**As part of the massive PR drive behind the *Bing at Christmas* CD, Decca launched a search for anyone with the birth name of Bing Crosby. This is how some of the publicity read.**

"Decca Records is launching a nationwide search for people who were born with the same name as the late American music star and White Christmas crooner, in an attempt to bring them together for a "once in a lifetime festive celebration.

The label said that, according to records, there are three people who were born Bing Crosby in the UK, one of whom is registered as living in Kent.

In a bid to find the Kent-based Bing Crosby, Decca has run an advert in this week's Kent Messenger that reads: "Calling all Bing Crosbys… If your birth name is Bing Crosby, we want to hear from you!"

The label has specified that a birth certificate is required as evidence of the name.

If all three Bing Crosbys – or more – are found, they will be invited to a "five-star Christmas lunch" at one of the entertainer's favourite London restaurants and will be presented with a special commemorative disc to mark the occasion.

They will also be joined by a special guest at the lunch.

Tom Lewis, vice president of Decca Records, said: "There is Christmas magic in Bing Crosby's voice – he will always be THE voice of Christmas. When he sings, he brings us all closer together, and these new recordings have him sounding better than ever.

"When we discovered there were possibly three people called Bing Crosby living in the UK, it caused complete pandemonium in the office and we knew we had to do what we could to bring them together."

The hunt comes ahead of the release of a new album, Bing At Christmas, on which Crosby's original vocals are set to newly-recorded orchestral arrangements by The London Symphony Orchestra.

The record includes a new version of White Christmas, Crosby's most famous hit."

*It is not known whether the three Bing Crosbys were ever found.*

# The Story of Bing Crosby

*The Sunday Post* is a weekly newspaper published in Dundee, Scotland, by DC Thomson, and starting on December 26 it ran three instalments of Bing's life story. Written by Craig Campbell, they mainly concentrated on Bing's film career. Probably nothing new for ICC members but some nice photos and it was good to see Bing featured in this way. The articles were also carried in the newspaper's sister publication The Weekly News.

# The Bing Crosby House

**Bing's childhood home in Spokane continues to attract visitors as newswise.com told us in December.**

SPOKANE, Wash. — On a clear and sunny Monday, Nov. 4, the last of the 2019 tour groups rolled through the Bing Crosby House museum on the Gonzaga University campus. Two tour buses arrived with 86 people, bringing the yearly total to 3,617 visitors to the boyhood home of the legendary singer, actor and Gonzaga alumnus.

The Craftsman-style Crosby House, located at the main entrance to Gonzaga, was built in 1911. Harry Lillis "Bing" Crosby lived there from a young age until 1925 when he departed for Hollywood fame and fortune. The Crosby family sold the house, built by Bing's father and uncles, in 1936 to a neighbor who lived there until 1978 when the Gonzaga Alumni Association purchased it. In 2008, the University acquired the home that now serves as the public museum for the world's largest public collection of Bing Crosby memorabilia.

Fans from all 50 states and at least 20 countries visit Gonzaga's campus each year to see the Crosby Collection — recognizing Spokane as his hometown and Gonzaga as his alma mater.

Bing Crosby began donating items to Gonzaga in 1957, including gold and platinum records, trophies, plaques, photographs and more. In 1993, the University received the entire collection from the Bing Crosby Historical Society in Tacoma, Washington, where he was born. Additionally, several collectors have given Gonzaga major donations of Crosby recordings.

Mike Schmeltzer, a member of the Advocates for Bing Crosby — a nonprofit organization dedicated to maintaining his legacy — volunteers for the Crosby House and has met countless folks from near and far with personal connections to Bing.

"People from all over the world come to the Crosby House because they still love Bing. They love his music and his movies," said Schmeltzer, noting this year marks a special 75th anniversary celebration of the film "Going My Way," for which Bing won the 1944 Academy Award for Best Actor. Visitors can see approximately 200 items, including the duplicate Oscar he won for "Going My Way."

There are 22 gold and two platinum records from such titles as "White Christmas," "Silent Night," and "Swinging on a Star." Also displayed are movie stills and photographs, record albums, books, and sheet music. There are many trophies and awards he received over the years from various organizations. "From the 1930s through the 1950s, he was the biggest thing in Hollywood — topping the recording industry, radio, movies and television," Schmeltzer says.

What's on display in the Crosby House represents just a portion of the total Crosby Collection materials. What is not on display is housed in the University Archives and Special Collections vault in the Foley Center Library. This vault also houses the University's Rare Book Collection, the Gerard Manley Hopkins Collection and many other manuscript collections. "The Bing Crosby House and all of the memorabilia found inside are tangible reminders of the man and his amazing career," said Schmeltzer. "Bing was an American pop culture colossus."

Schmeltzer reflected on why he enjoys being a member of the Bing Crosby Advocates. "Our mission is to celebrate Bing and keep his memory alive in his hometown," Schmeltzer says. "Beyond that, I think we're celebrating the arts, especially music and film, as well as the history of Spokane and Gonzaga, even how a family and a neighborhood shape a person."

# Spokane Remembers Bing

Following on from the previous article, the fifth annual Holiday Open House at the Bing Crosby House Museum was held on December 7. The museum at 508 E. Sharp Ave. was decorated for the holidays, and free hot cider and cookies were served by the Bing Crosby Advocates.

On display was the Best Actor Oscar Bing won for the 1944 film *Going My Way*, in which he portrayed a priest – a role which was a natural for him, he once said, as he was raised in the Logan District of Spokane and was educated by priests at what was then Gonzaga High School and also Gonzaga University.

The following Saturday the 14th Annual Bing Crosby Holiday Film Festival was held with several films being shown.

| | |
|---|---|
| **10:30 a.m.** | **White Christmas** |
| **1:00 p.m.** | **Going My Way** |
| **3:30 p.m.** | **Waikiki Wedding** |
| **5:30 p.m.** | **Howard Crosby and The Zonky Jazz Band** |
| **7:30 p.m.** | **White Christmas** |

There was a gallery of photos of Bing, film clips of him entertaining the troops in WWII and a special live musical performance by Howard Crosby (son of Bing Crosby's brother Ted) featuring music from the Crosby era.

Bing Crosby Advocates presents the festival at the Bing Crosby Theater in downtown Spokane each December as part of the community's celebration of the holiday season. It was at this theater, then known as the Clemmer, that a young Bing Crosby began his career by performing skits in between the silent films shown there. The theater was renamed for him in 2006.

*(Editor: Well done the Advocates for all your hard work!)*

# Gary Giddins wins another award for his Crosby book

Just as we went to press last October, the Association for Recorded Sound Collections announced the winners of the 2019 ARSC Awards for Excellence in Historical Recorded Sound Research. The awards will be presented at a ceremony on May 23, 2020, during ARSC's annual conference in Montreal, Canada. Additional information about the conference and the ARSC Awards for Excellence can be found at www.arsc-audio.org.

The awardees are as follows.

**BEST RESEARCH IN RECORDED ROCK AND POPULAR MUSIC**

Best History (tie)

**Gary Giddins, Bing Crosby: Swinging on a Star: The War Years, 1940-1946 (Little, Brown, & Co.)**

Marisol Berrios-Miranda, American Sabor: Latinos and Latinas in US Popular Music/ Latinos y latinas en la musica popular estadounidense (University of Washington Press)

*(Editor: A well-deserved accolade for Gary. Surely there's got to be a Volume 3!)*

# Going My Way in Warrington, UK

**Jason Liddiard brings us up-to-date with the recent Crosby get-togethers.**

Our autumn Bing fest took place a little later in the season than usual on Saturday, 19th October, meaning my branch report encompasses both the Autumn and Christmas gatherings. In this, the first of the 'reduced to 48 pages' edition of BING I know you will be both thrilled and overwhelmed at finding such value for money!

Both meetings presented a healthy selection of new Crosby album releases to review and enjoy, and these reviews took up a fair amount of our meeting time.

We were honoured to have new attendees Michael and Brenda Reynolds join us for both meetings. Michael is the son of the late and much revered Crosby enthusiast Fred Reynolds, author of the magnificent 5-volume The Crosby Collection, along with The Road to Hollywood amongst other tomes.

Our autumn meeting covered the two recent CD releases from Sounds of Yester Year: *Bing Sings Burke and Van Heusen* and *Immersed in Mr Mercer's Verse.* To demonstrate the high sound quality of these CD

*The Christmas meeting*

transfers, from the former we played *Humpty Dumpty Heart*, an exemplary performance by Bing with the Woody Herman Orchestra from July 1941; a Treasury Star Parade version of *Sunday, Monday or Always* this time with full orchestral backing; *Personality*, possibly from a GI Journal broadcast of May, 1945 and *To See You Is to Love You* from the General Electric broadcast of 18th December, 1952.

Our track choices from *Immersed in Mr Mercer's Voice* were *You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby* with brother Bob's Orchestra, *Dearly Beloved* with John Scott Trotter from May 1944 and, finally *P.S. I Love You* from a General Electric Show broadcast in September, 1953 that has Bing's voice soaring to a thrilling Ziggy Elman trumpet solo. (Note: this track has long been a personal favourite of mine and as I get to compile the meeting programme, well…)

Our Christmas Special focused, of course, on the Decca release *Bing at Christmas*. All agreed it was just wonderful to see Bing featured so prominently in the media in the run up to Christmas, due to the exposure and publicity surrounding this particular release. Mary Crosby was seen often at this time on radio and TV promoting her late Dad's vocals. We showed her Sky News interview to highlight what a great job Mary was doing to raise awareness of the album and to help bring Bing's output to the ears of a new generation. On that note, I left a few spare copies of BING #183 in a breakout room back at the office and these were picked up by some of the younger work colleagues, one of whom came to look for me as he'd seen my photo in the magazine. He asked for any spare back issues I might have, so I dropped some off a couple of days later and he shared them with his team members. Next time I saw him he was full of glowing comments regarding the professionalism of the publication and its interesting content. He asked me to recommend some early Bing tracks for him to hear, which I did by sending him some YouTube links.

During our October meeting Keith Richmond provided an interesting talk concerning one Roy Manley, a Bing record collector who was, sadly, a casualty of the Normandy D-Day landings of 75 years ago. To commemorate the brave souls who took part in those historic landing operations we featured a few of Bing's war time recordings, including *I Don't Want*

*Bing sings to Julie Andrews in High Tor*

*to Walk Without You* from a KMH broadcast of 1942, which had everyone singing along…

In another anniversary spot we turned back the clock 20 years to the Leeds meeting of October 1999. I had acquired a DVD of the programme shown during what was the 34th annual dinner meeting of the ICC, which included video clips of Bing's songs from 'High Tor'. Although this had been shown 20 years previously, most at the meeting attendees were watching these clips for the first time.

Also during our autumn meeting, we were all fortunate enough to hear a newly found Bing recording for the first time! Editor Malcolm had managed to get hold of an mp3 copy of *Our Last Hawaiian Moon*, the recently discovered Bing 78 that was recorded 1st October, 1936 in Hawaii. (See BING #183 for a full write-up by our editor.)

Some rarely played Bing tracks had been heard on national radio in the weeks preceding our autumn meeting, so we gave thanks to Don Black of BBC R2 and Alyn Shipton of BBC R3's *Jazz Record Requests* by playing *It's the Talk of the Town; Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?* and *There Ain't No Sweet Man*. Great to hear Bing over the airwaves on national radio!

Our film show for October was the 1936 Columbia Pictures release *Pennies From Heaven*, featuring 1930s Bing at his 'strolling player' best! These films are seldom if ever shown on TV these days, so I believe it's vitally important that we include them in our programmes. If nothing else, it might prompt other members to pull out their DVD copies for a viewing.

There was no room for a feature film in our Christmas Special meeting this time, but we did show clips from Bing's 1970s Christmas TV shows recently screened in a marathon showing on the US GetTV channel; notably, a 'best of' compilation of the 1972, '73 and '74 shows plus the 1975 *Merry Christmas, Fred from the Crosbys*. We did, however, find time to show some musical moments from *Going My Way*. Famous actor James Stewart (*It's a Wonderful Life, Harvey,* etc…) once said that making movies was about creating moments. Well, the scene in

*Going My Way* where Bing rehearses Silent Night with the juvenile choir is a truly wonderful 'movie moment'!

We also found time during our December meeting to pay tribute to the then recently departed F.B. 'Wig' Wiggins. Michael Crampton had flown to the US in order to attend Wig's funeral and told us of how well the proceedings had gone. In memory of Wig we played Bing's *Once in a While* (July, 1976) which had been played at Wig's funeral, followed by our own tribute *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day*, Bing's emotionally powerful Christmas recording from October, 1956.

Roving reporter Keith Richmond, complete with slide show and photos, told us of his trip to Norway and a visit to the site in Momarkedet, near Mysen where Bing played an open air concert on 27th August, 1977 less than two months before he died.

To my knowledge, Bing's Christmas album from the early 1970s entitled *A Time To Be Jolly* has only ever been issued once on CD, sometime back in the early/mid 1990s. I don't have the CD but I do have the record album, and so we played the whole of side one of this lovely and underrated (Bing is in very fine voice throughout) Christmas LP.

I'm writing this report on 1st January, 2020 and thinking how marvellous it is that we continue to enjoy and promote Bing's lasting legacy well into the 21st Century!

**Jason Liddiard** *email: jkl@galleryjkl.com*

# Shooting Quail at Pinebloom

Ron McBride drew my attention to a 10" acetate recording by Bing offered on eBay in February. The recording was specially made by Bing following a visit to shoot quail on the Pinebloom Plantation in Albany, Georgia, probably in January 1971. Initially advertised with an opening price of $4.49, it eventually sold for $22.28 after four bids. The song can now be heard on YouTube – search for Pinebloom Bing Crosby 1971. Bing and Kathryn's hosts at Pinebloom were Willard ("Al") Rockwell and his wife Connie.

# TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of $3 or £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entires. Please send all advertisements to the Editor.

**Gord Atkinson** 715-2018 Robertson Rd., Nepean, Ottawa, ON, K2H 1C6, Canada.

Gord's latest book "The Golden Years of Entertainment" is available to Crosby collectors for $20.00 US or Canadian funds or equivalent in British pounds. Write to Gord direct.

**John Bassett** "Bingville", 15 Oast Way, Rochford, Essex SS4 1RZ, UK

**STILL WANTED:** The following UK 7" vinyl records are required in good condition. Please state prices and postage costs.

Brunswick 45rpm singles: 45-05244, 45-05269

MGM 45rpm EP: ES 3515 "Bing and Satchmo" – Stereo issue only.

*John is also seeking:*

10" Brunswick LPs: LA8578 "Road to Bali", LA8584 "The Quiet Man" and LA8728 "Curtain Call, Vol. 2".

**Michael Crampton**
Details on inside front cover.

Michael still has copies of "The Definitive Bing Crosby Discography" by Wig Wiggins and Jim Reilly. £10 + postage (£3 in UK, £11.65 worldwide). Proceeds will go to the ICC funds.

**Lars Schinnerling** Germany
Email: lschinnerling@gmx.net

Lars writes:

May I also place a want ad in the upcoming BING magazine? When Larry Kiner's NOSTALGIA Co. in Redmond was still around, they not only issued issued "Bing in the Thirties" on LP in the 80s but eight volumes of (additional?) KMH songs on CD (Spokane 1900 - 1907). I still miss Vol. 3 to 5. I'm interested in buying originals but would also be OK with copies if other collectors don't want to part with their copies (which I'll fully understand).

Contact Lars direct please.

## Crosby Clubs Around the World

The ICC is very pleased to be associated with the Australian Bing Crosby Society. The society's details are:

**The Australian Bing Crosby Society**
Peter De Ryk, 11 Holden Rd., Kallista, Victoria 3791, Australia (tel. [03] 9755 3013 – email: deryk@net2000.com.au)

Bi-monthly newsletters are issued by the Society and they can now be received in PDF form by email if desired. The regular film nights continue and in December, *Top O' the Morning* was shown plus a BBC4 documentary about Al Bowlly. February saw a showing of *The Road to Hong Kong* with support from an episode of Bing's sitcom series "That's the Way the Suki Yaki's" which was originally shown on February 1, 1965. The venue has temporarily had to be switched to the North Fitzroy Library, Melbourne while the Collingwood Library undergoes repairs.

# Other Appreciation Societies

**We have reciprocal arrangements with the following clubs and societies for publicity purposes. They kindly advertise our club in their magazines and we are very pleased to return the favour.**

**Frankie Laine International Appreciation Society**, **www.flias.com**
c/o Tony Cooper, 18 Napier Crescent, Seamer, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 4HY, UK
Tel /Fax 01723 863022 Email: tony@flias.com
A magazine called *Laine Lines* is published three times a year.

**International Al Jolson Society**
**www.jolson.org** *(Also on Facebook)*
c/o Sandra K. Gerloff, 419 Glenwood Drive, Douglassville, PA 19518, USA. A different Jolson radio show can be heard via the web site each week.

**International Tony Bennett Appreciation Society**, c/o Mark Fox, 15 Kilpin Hill Lane, Staincliffe, West Yorkshire, WF13 4BG, UK
Tel: 01924 401909 Email: markfoxtbas@hotmail.com

**Memory Lane**
**www.memorylane.org.uk**
P. O. Box 1939, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3UH, England

The acclaimed quarterly magazine for lovers of 1920s, 1930s and 1940s music. A "*must*" for 78 RPM collectors. Initial annual subscription only £10 (UK) or £15 (overseas) for readers of BING magazine. (Normal price £16 - UK, £22 - overseas.)

**Sinatra Music Society**
**www.sinatramusicsociety.com**
Mrs. Pat Harvey, National Secretary, 11 Mossbank Avenue, Burntwood, Staffordshire WS7 4UN, UK
Tel: 01543-899771

The Society was founded in 1955. A quarterly magazine called *Perfectly Frank* is issued. Fees within the UK are £15 a year; £19 for European membership and £23 for the rest of the world.

# Judy - With a Little Help from Her Friends

**Martin McQuade reports.**

Zing went the strings of the hearts of the audience attending *Judy! A Garland of Song*, which The Mabel Mercer Cabaret Convention presented on October 30, 2019 at Lincoln Center's Rose Hall in New York. The on-stage hosts were Klea Blackhurst, a vivacious Ethel Merman specialist, and John Fricke, Garland historian extraordinaire and Mabel Mercer Foundation board member. The twosome joyously launched the celebration with "That's Judy," a parody Jerry Herman fashioned from "That's Entertainment."

Fricke's charm and erudition were mainstays of the evening. After bringing to our attention that "2019 is the 80th anniversary of *The Wizard of Oz*, the 75th anniversary of *Meet Me in St. Louis*, and the 65th anniversary of *A Star is Born* - the good version," he and his colleague ushered an assembly of performers, some of whom particularly shone. Jennifer Sheehan gave a sultry rendition of "But Not for Me." Carole J. Bufford heralded the yuletide season with a heartbreaking interpretation of "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas." Operatic diva Stephanie Blythe stopped the show with her seismic approach to "I Don't Care," a feat which bon vivant Garland connoisseur Sidney Myer equaled with "When the Midnight Choo Choo Leaves for Alabam." Blackhurst was "of the earth, earthy" as she relayed "Pretty Girl Milking Her Cow." Will Nunziata echoed Garland's robust interpretation of "Come Rain or Come Shine," and then joined his identical twin Anthony with a high-wire contrapuntal arrangement of "Get Happy" and "Happy Days Are Here Again." Ruby Rakos, star of *Chasing Rainbows: The Road to Oz* at The Paper Mill Playhouse displayed a soulfulness belying her youth with "I'm Nobody's Baby." A highlight of the evening was the presentation of The Julie Wilson Award to Hannah Jane Peterson, whose rendition of "Friendly Star" from *Summer Stock* was nearly as poignant as Garland's performance on Bing's Chesterfield Show. The evening sadly ended with Billy Stritch's "I Could Go on Singing," a promise that one wished he would have fulfilled.

Mr. Fricke, a Milwaukee native, has lived in Manhattan for forty-five years and has written extensively on his lifelong idol. His definitive *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz: An Illustrated History of an American Classic* is among the most dog-eared movie tomes. He won Emmy Awards as producer of the *American Masters* film, *Judy Garland: By Myself* (which tells Garland's story mostly in her own words), as well as the A&E "Biography" special, *Judy: Beyond the Rainbow*. A few days prior to the concert, he consented to a discussion on all things Bing and Judy.

**How would you describe the relationship of Bing and Judy?**
I think Judy was very calm, relaxed and secure with Bing, and in turn, she energized him. One of Judy's directors said, "The better the people you put her with, the better she was." That was Bing and Judy. She respected Bing so much. They were the absolute best at what they did. I've always venerated Bing as both preeminent male singer and such a good friend to her, and somebody she liked very much, as well. They balanced each other's equation. Bing once said this of Judy. "She's the perfect illustration of the 100% professional. You can't help being drawn by her magnetism and it rubs off on you, too. Nobody can be professionally indifferent when she's part of the act."

**Bing's writer Hal Kanter recalled that Bing once advised the audience before the taping of a Chesterfield Show to be kind to Judy. This was her first professional appearance after a highly-publicized suicide attempt a couple of months prior. "We got a friend here under trouble recently. You probably heard about it. Everything's fine now. She needs our love. She needs our support. Let's give it to her, OK? Here's Judy." Kanter recalled, "When she came out, the audience went crazy and she blossomed." This story perfectly illustrates their relationship.**
That is so typical of what he would have done. He was very wise about her without being gossipy or tacky. He was just matter of fact. A gentleman who worked for Judy at her home for several years later told an interviewer, "The bad things Judy did, that was her head, not her heart. In her heart, she was a wonderful person." I always get that same sense with Bing, that he was a man of great propriety in his own way. He knew what he needed to keep his heart going, to keep his energy going, to keep himself going. She never stopped being grateful for what he did for her in 1950 and 1951. It was so important to her self-esteem and self-confidence, both personally and professionally, to find out she was indeed still Judy Garland. Here is a telling moment that shows Bing's high regard for Judy. After doing The Palladium and The Palace, Judy appeared on three shows with Bing in May and June 1952. At the very end of the final show, Bing says, "Just for sentimental reasons, I don't think you should leave us until you sing you-know-what." "What?" she asks, and he says, gently, "You know . . . ." She replies, "Oh, you mean this . . . ?" Then, as soon as Judy sings the first word, "Some-where . . . ," a woman in the audience audibly reacts, "Oh!" -- as if to say, "We didn't expect this." The whole audience applauds. And as a result, that particular show doesn't end with a Crosby song; he turned the finish over to her.

**Did Bing ever attend Judy's show at The Palace Theater in New York?**
Alan King told this story when we interviewed him. He was one of Judy's opening acts at The Palace in 1956. He said, "Whenever Bing was in town, he would come to see Judy at The Palace." I think he even was called on the carpet by The American Guild of Variety Artists for getting up and singing a quick duet with her. They said. "Oh, you can't do that." I'm sure this didn't faze Bing a bit!

**Bing was almost 20 years older that she was. I'm sure in a way he was a paternal figure to her, although they could have been very realistic as a romantic couple on screen, notwithstanding the age difference.**
I agree. It just kills me that there's no visual film or tape of Judy and Bing singing together. There's a quote from a newspaper interview with Judy in October 1963 when she was doing her TV series. One of the reporters asked her whom she wanted to have on her show during the first season. She said, "I definitely want Bing Crosby on my show. Maybe I'll go on his show in return. Even if I don't, I definitely want him on my show." Sadly, it was not to be. There were rumors of three or four film projects that I wish would have happened: *Pardners*, a western with Hopalong Cassidy -- and Bing did try to get her to do what became *Just for You*. There was another project called *Manhattan Tower*, with Judy, Bing and Bob Hope. That would have been great, given the fun the three of them had on radio. Their comedy renditions of "Goodnight Irene," "*The Third Man* Theme," and the Armed Forces Radio material are classic.

Roger Edens, so pivotal in Judy's career, and director Charles Walters worked like crazy to get the Dorothy Fields/Arthur Schwartz musical *By the Beautiful Sea* done for them. In early August 1962, Edens had gone over to London where Judy had just finished *I Could Go On Singing*. They had dinner together. He wrote to Peter Shaw, then an MGM executive, saying how wonderful Judy looked and how much weight she had lost. He really thought that Charles Walters and he could get her through a picture. The desire was there. The planets just didn't align. I don't let myself wallow too much in what might have been, but in the case of Judy and Bing, it is such a regret.

**After Bing's wife Dixie died in 1952 Judy guest-hosted his GE radio show. That gesture again demonstrated what a close bond they had. Photos of them together also reveal mutual affection, such as their pose on the 1955 *Look Magazine* cover, when they won the periodical's acting awards. They're so at ease with each other.**
I think that they intuitively just looked at each other and they knew, "OK, I'm me, you're you, we both know what it takes to be Crosby and Garland and we're just going to have fun and enjoy the fact we're on this plateau of our own together." What I think of most when I think of Bing and Judy is their comedy together. When she

LOOK
A wave of terror threatens the South
By HODDING CARTER
DOLLAR-A-DAY DIET
MOVIE AWARDS
STARS OF THE YEAR: JUDY GARLAND · BING CROSBY

laughs, he laughs, because it's infectious and contagious. They revel in it. The first comedy routine of theirs that I heard came via a reel-to-reel tape; I was fourteen when I got it, and it decimated me: It was beautifully written, beautifully performed, and totally spontaneous at the same time. This was the 1951 "Hopalong Cassidy" cowboy take-off, with Judy was "Bounce-Along Garland" – and Bing as "the attractive young schoolteacher from the East." That's pure, crazy fun, and virtually all of their sketches were like that.

**Bing should have won the Oscar for *The Country Girl*, and many believe Judy should have won for *A Star Is Born*. I like Brando's performance, but Bing was so mesmerizing in *The Country Girl*. He bares it all.**
Brando was playing Marlon Brando. There were times we know that Bing enjoyed "a bit of the bubbly" (to quote *High Society*), but to see him playing dissolute, down-and-out and unmasked was remarkable.

**What are some of your favorite Bing/Judy duets?**
The Decca recordings are marvelous. Some favorite broadcast duets are "Maybe It's Because," "Confess," "The Way You Look Tonight," "You're Just in Love" and "Just the Way You Are." Even throwaway songs like "April in Paris," "Limehouse Blues" and "Isle of Capri" are lovely. Some favorite comic duets are "These Lush Moments," "Tear Bucket Jim," "Punchy and Judy," "My Blue Boy," "Boise, Idaho," "Ma, He's Making Eyes at Me" and "The Groaner, The Canary and The Nose" (the last one with Jimmy Durante, of course). One of my least favorites is "People Will Say We're in Love." Judy and Bing are fine, but the orchestration doesn't quite fit the song.

**Bing could belt with the best of them but he didn't usually do so. On their duet of "When You Wore a Tulip," however, he joins Judy on a massive final note. I think that she brings that out in him, that he wants to meet her at that same vocal peak.**
Singing really loud was part of Judy's good time. No question. They were just facing each other at a microphone, or standing at two adjacent microphones, watching each other and just having a good time. They had a beautiful simplicity in their sound, with just a few subtle embellishments. Judy and Bing would sacrifice a pure note for a meaningful note, but they didn't gunk it up. She gave him a little bit of a jolt because she was in it so much heart and soul, no matter what she sang. Of course, Bing could certainly swing it out hard. I think of him with Louis Armstrong in *High Society,* and the other recordings they made together. I also cherish his duet album with Fred Astaire. Judy was a singer but, as she herself said, she was primarily an entertainer. They gave up some of themselves in the process of doing what they did.

I owe so much to Judy. When you get really interested in her, you get interested in everyone else, too -- from Jolson to Streisand. Likewise, I know so many songs because I heard Bing sing them. I sang professionally for many years; Judy and Bing were among my "teaching tools." You paid attention, because you couldn't help it. And you wanted to LISTEN to them; they deserved it – and they never made a command of it. They've both been gone for a long time, yet as everyone always puts it, "They've never been away." Lyricist Sammy Cahn frequently told a great anecdote about the first time, in the early 1940s, when Sinatra sang with Judy. After their rehearsal – they were doing a radio show together -- Sammy asked him, "What is it like to sing with her?" Frank thoughtfully replied, "Every time she sings, she dies a little." When Judy actually died in 1969, it was almost as if show business was over; the same emotional reaction hit again eight years later when Bing passed.

**Did you ever see either Judy or Bing in the flesh?**
I saw Judy in concert in Chicago three times, when I was in my teens. There was rarefied air when she performed. It was extraordinary, the joy that went from her to the audience and back again. You can call it love, call it communication, call it whatever you like. It was unique to her, in my experience. Unfortunately, I only saw Bing up close once. He was here in New York for the concerts in 1976. There was a reception for him at Ted Hook's Backstage. Bing came in with his entourage. When it came time for him to leave, the entourage was straggling and he was just standing by the door where I was. We didn't exchange but two words but the eyes were just so beautiful. People describe Bing's eyes as "robin's egg blue," and that's what I vividly recall.

**In closing, how would you describe Judy's impact upon you?**
An interviewer at a 2005 screening at the Deauville Film Festival of a restored print of *The Wizard of Oz* asked me, "What do the film and Judy Garland mean to you in your life now?" I opened my mouth and it was one of those moments when God sends the words, because I really didn't know how to respond. And then I heard myself say, "They have become a passport to my life."

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## The Music of Loesser: "Full of Wonder as Angel Song"

That lyric from "The Music of Home" describes the aura of The Mabel Mercer Cabaret Convention concert *Frank Loesser: Heart and Soul* on October 29. Jeff Harnar and Andrea Marcovicci were hosts of a jubilant song cavalcade. The bill of fare of fare contained several songs upon which Bing put his stamp. Joshua Lance Dixon expressed a heartfelt "I Believe in You," Barbara Brussell captured the yearning of "I Wish I Didn't Love You So." Marissa Mulder told us that "I Don't Want to Walk Without You" was a particular favorite of Irving Berlin. Danny Bacher spread mirth with both his voice and saxophone with "If I Were a Bell." Steve Ross deftly navigated the treacherous curves of "The New Ashmolean." Lennie Watts, David Sabella and Tim Schall joined Bacher for a jaunty "Fugue for Tinhorns." Karen Akers melted hearts with "Spring Will Be a Little Late This Year."

Apart from Bing-related songs, Tovah Feldshuh incarnated Tallulah Bankhead with a raucous presentation of "Murder, He Says." Barbara Fasano's delineation of "Sand in My Shoes" was not too sentimental, but suggested a keen melancholy. She melded with husband, pianist/singer Eric Comstock on a seductive version of "*Guys and Dolls*," while Comstock's solo on "My Time of Day" from Guys and Dolls beautifully evoked the "film noir" overtones of this threnody. Marilyn Maye brought the elegant soiree to its conclusion with a sensuous performance of "Joey, Joey, Joey" and a locomotive delivery of "Luck Be a Lady." This superb homage to the brilliant lyricist and composer revived a bygone era enraptured by dazzling words and scintillating music. We are much obliged to the Mabel Mercer Convention for providing such a cherished respite.

*Bing with Frank Loesser (left). Peter Lind Hayes is on the far right. (Courtesy of Frank Loesser Enterprises)*

Thank you to Joseph Weiss, general manager of Frank Loesser Enterprises, for generously providing a WW2 era photo of Bing with Loesser and Peter Lind Hayes.

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### Bing Bits

*Elvis in Vegas* by Richard Zoglin (Simon and Schuster; 2019) shares this insight into how Bing regarded the meteoric "King."

*Shecky Greene - who thought Elvis was a wonderful kid, but turned down an offer from Colonel Parker to tour with Elvis as his opening act, finding the prospect fairly absurd - never quite understood what all the fuss was about. One day he ran into Bing Crosby, who was in Vegas during Elvis' engagement [Elvis' booking at The New Frontier, his first in in Vegas] "What is the thing about this kid?" Shecky asked the elder statesman of American pop singing. "He's a nice kid, but…" "Shecky," Bing replied, "he'll be the biggest star in show business."*

Zoglin also informs that impresario Donn Arden's fabled Pzazz '68 show at The Desert Inn included "segments paying homage to Fred Astaire, the Hope-Crosby *Road* pictures, and *Beau Geste*-style foreign-legion epics."

On November 3, 2019, this reporter celebrated Johnny Mercer's 110th birthday at The Greenhouse Café in Brooklyn. Pianist Dan Furman provided accompaniment for the show, which featured these songs associated with Bing: "And the Angels Sing," "Bob White," "Skylark," "Autumn Leaves," "When the World Was Young," "Mandy Is Two," "That Old Black Magic," "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive," "Let's Take the Long Way Home," "I Promise You," "Old Glory," "Out of This World," "June Comes Around Every Year," "Dearly Beloved," "Jamboree Jones," "The Dixieland Band," "Spring. Spring, Spring," "Love in a Home," "Too Marvelous for Words," " You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby," "Jeepers Creepers," " On the Atchison, Topeka and The Santa Fe," "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening," "My Shining Hour," "I Thought About You," "I Remember You," "Tangerine," "I'm an Old Cowhand" and "One for My Baby."

**Martin McQuade**

## A Salute to Bing Crosby & The Andrews Sisters

**A Review by Perry Huntoon**

Serendipity! That was the feeling I had when I opened the winter 2019 issue of BING and found a reference to an upcoming tribute to Bing and the Andrews Sisters that was to occur in my back yard – the suburbs of Chicago. I found it quite amusing that any local notice of this event had escaped my attention. Thankfully, our editor keeps a sharp eye out for such happenings, even those some 3,800 miles from his home domain.

Lincolnshire is a small northern suburb of the city of Chicago. Located about 30 miles north of the city, it was incorporated in 1957 and has a population of approximately 7,500 with a median annual family income of about $150,000. With some major corporate offices in the village and convenient transportation options, it attracts many visitors and this led to the opening of the upscale Lincolnshire Marriott Resort, which has since undergone a $28 million renovation and includes an 18-hole golf course and the plush Marriott Theater.

It is this theater that hosted "*Swinging on A Star,*" a salute to Bing Crosby and the Andrews Sisters starring Broadway's Jared Bradshaw. Two performances were scheduled for Tuesday December 17, 2019, but when I

SWINGING ON A STAR
A SALUTE TO BING CROSBY AND THE ANDREWS SISTERS
STARRING BROADWAY'S JARED BRADSHAW
New Show Added!
MONDAY, DECEMBER 16, 7:30PM
SOLD OUT-BOTH SHOWS
Marriott THEATRE
MICHAEL INGERSOLL'S ARTISTS LOUNGE LIVE

checked, I found out that they had quickly sold out. I was a bit dismayed and rather astonished considering that Bing departed this life over 40 years ago and the Andrews Sisters had stopped performing together over 50 years ago. But, with the Christmas season upon us, I realized that Bing's holiday recordings were now being played and that would certainly stir up some nostalgic interest. Fortunately, a third performance was added for Monday night, the 16th, and I quickly secured a ticket for that show.

I had never heard of Jared Bradshaw. But, as I discovered, he is a New Yorker and has played in the smash hit *Jersey Boys* both on Broadway and in a touring company. He has performed many times off Broadway, in regional theater and aboard cruises. Jared can sing, act and dance, thus affording him the ability to perform in various guises. Accompanying him for this tour were three spritely young ladies: Maggie Salley, Molly Wiley and Jess Berzack as "The Andrews Sisters."

The Marriott Theater is intimate with about ten rows of seats occupying three sides of the stage. There are an additional three rows behind the stage that can accommodate an overflow audience. They were empty for this show, but the remainder of the theater was almost totally filled with patrons expecting a joyous fun filled two-hour musical show. And from their reaction, they were well entertained.

A small musical combo entered the stage first and after getting situated, the "sisters" came up smartly attired in matching green dresses. Jared then bounded up on the stage from an aisle and the show was underway. My first impression was that Jared looks nothing like Bing. He is 6 feet tall while Bing was just a little over 5' 7". Yet, as he sang, from a profile vantage he looked very much like a Crosby. But, due to his relative youth, it was Gary, not Bing, that he most resembled. But the mannerisms were all Bing and the sisters sounded close enough to Patty, Laverne & Maxene that one might think it was the real deal. As this was a holiday show, the emphasis was on Christmas tunes. Of the 24 songs performed, 11 were related to the holiday season. A full listing follows this narrative.

I was perplexed over a couple of the tunes that I really didn't associate with Bing. One was *You're Just in Love*. I remembered that only as a 1951 hit by Perry Como & the Fontane Sisters. Yet, when I looked it up afterward in the Bing Crosby songography, I found that Bing had performed it several times on his radio show in the 1951-53 period and usually in duet with such as Judy Garland or Rosemary Clooney. Likewise, *White Cliffs of Dover* was a big hit for Kay Kyser (and other bands) in 1942, but never recorded by Bing. But again, a check of the songography shows that he sang it several times on the Kraft Music Hall in 1942 and reprised it in England in 1976. Clearly, Jared had done his homework.

The show was a full two hours in length plus a 15-minute intermission. As the intermission was relatively short, most patrons remained seated and quietly talked among themselves, seemingly quite pleased with what had just transpired. As the audience tended to be older, there was almost no one diverting their attention by gazing at their hand-held devices. Quite a contrast from venues with a younger crowd! When Jared appeared back on stage for the second half, he had an unlit pipe in his mouth. It was a beautiful prop for the first few minutes while he talked about Bing and the music. The "sisters" had changed to blue dresses and looked more glamorous than ever.

We were quickly taken to Hawaii for a rendition of *Mele Kalikimaka* after which Jared smoothly transitioned to Bing's two theme songs before being rejoined by the "sisters." The show continued with a rapt audience ending with a rendition of *White Christmas* and an extended ovation for the performers. It was truly wonderful to see several hundred people being entertained by the music of the singer who *Music Digest* in 1948 declared "the most admired man alive."

Following the performances in Lincolnshire, Jared took the show to Georgia where they performed at the Morton Theater in Athens on December 21 and the Miller Theater in Augusta on December 22. On December 20th, they performed a variation titled "*A Bing Crosby Christmas*" at the Henry County Schools Performing Arts Center in McDonough, a suburb of Atlanta. It appears that, in addition to the crowds at Lincolnshire, a lot of lucky Georgians also garnered a healthy dose of Bing during the holiday season.

Following in order of performance are the tunes sung at Lincolnshire:

*I'll Be Home for Christmas - Happy Holiday - Jingle Bells - Pennies from Heaven - (There'll Be Bluebirds Over) The White Cliffs of Dover - Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy - Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive - It's Been a Long, Long Time - As Time Goes By - Here Comes Santa Claus - Santa Claus Is Coming to Town - It's Beginning to Look Like Christmas - Mele Kalikimaka – Moonlight Becomes You - Where the Blue of the Night - You're Just in Love - You've Got Me Where You Want Me - Swinging on a Star – Snow - Silver Bells - Christmas in Killarney - I'll Be Seeing You - Count Your Blessings - White Christmas*

**Perry Huntoon**

# The Crosby Imitators

**Mike Kaptanis has been taking a look at some of the singers who based their career on trying to sing like Bing.**

They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and you can believe Bing Crosby had a long list of imitators. Therefore, in this article we list chronologically a small group of vocalists (some well-known and others more obscure) whose styles were patterned after the incomparable Bing.

**1. Harlan Lattimore**, called "the Black Bing Crosby," began his recording career with Fletcher Henderson's band and he went on to record with the Don Redman Orchestra between 1932 and 1936. Billy Eckstine considered him his inspiration. Lattimore's style of singing, as well as the timber of his beautiful voice, closely resembling that of Bing, earned him recording dates with some of the top studio and dance bands of the era, most notably those of Victor Young, Abe Lyman and Isham Jones, as well a number of dates as vocalist on a number of generic dance records for ARC on their various labels. He also made a number of records for Columbia in 1932 which were billed as Harlan Lattimore and His Orchestra, one of which was "With Summer Coming On", which Bing also recorded. The 1933 Vitaphone short, *Don Redman and his Orchestra* is included on the Warner Brothers DVD of *Dames*, where Lattimore sings a beautiful rendition of Harold Arlen's "Ill Wind", which the Redman band never recorded.

Search against his name on YouTube if you want to hear how close to Mr. Crosby he sounded.

**2. Charlie Palloy**, who played guitar and led an orchestra (personnel unknown), recorded basically for the Crown label between 1932 and 1933 when he made 22 recordings and sang the popular Bing songs of the day. Charlie's Crown recording sessions took place over a 10 month period, from September 1932 to July 1933. Most of this work was reissued on a 1999 CD from The Old Masters which can still be obtained if you look around. He is another whose work can be found on YouTube and his version of "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime" is well worth hearing.

**3. Lee Bennett**, a deep-voiced romantic balladeer who also sounded like Russ Columbo, recorded on and off with the Jan Garber Orchestra from 1933 through the early forties. He was the vocalist on many of the orchestra's hit recordings including "The Boulevard of Broken Dreams" (1934), "The Object of My Affection (1935) and "Moon over Miami" (1936). He finished his career as a radio announcer on a Chicago station.

**4. Buddy Clark** probably sang closer to the "high" Crosby than any of the other singers who became associated with the "deeper" Crosby, such as Dick Todd, Perry Como, and Dean Martin. Clark was prominent on radio from the mid-thirties through the forties. He made many recordings and is probably best known for his 1947 renditions of "Linda", "Peg 'O My Heart" and "How Are Things in Glocca Morra." He recorded with all the major bands of the day, but his career was curtailed by an airplane crash in 1949. Had he had the looks of a Russ Columbo, he would have gone far in Hollywood.

*Buddy Clark*

**5.** Not much has to be said about **Perry Como's** career as it will be well-known to most readers. He had a long one starting with the Ted Weems band in 1936 when he was undoubtedly a Crosby imitator and continuing as a soloist with his own style to make hit after hit. I saw him perform at the Paramount Theater, and though he was not an "exciting" singer (in fact, he could have been used as a substitute for sleeping pills) he maintained a large following. He passed away in 2001 and will always be remembered for his "non-Hollywood" personality.

**6. Dick Todd**, called "the Canadian Crosby," was most popular during the forties singing on the "Hit Parade." His early recordings were with Larry Clinton in 1938, and then he became quite famous when he made ten solo hit records for Bluebird in 1940 with "The Gaucho Serenade" being the most popular. He was not too prominent later, though he did record into the early fifties.

*Dick Todd*

**7. Dean Martin** captured Bing's easy, effortless style of singing and was a natural baritone, so it was not too difficult for him to emulate Crosby's style and phrasing. As we know, he had a very successful career starting in films and moved later into television with a long-running show in the sixties and seventies.

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There are others not mentioned but nevertheless added to the legacy of the Crosby imitators, fine singers such as **Al Bowlly**, **Bob Eberle**, **Bob Manning**, **Steve Mason**, and **Dick Haymes** among others.

*Russ Columbo*

**Russ Columbo** was purposely omitted from the above list since he and Bing virtually started their careers about the same time. While Bing was with the Rhythm Boys in the Paul Whiteman band, Russ vocalized with the Ambassador Trio with Gus Arnheim. Crosby basically began his great solo career in 1931 on the Brunswick label, and Columbo started his on the same year for Victor, although he made less than two dozen records. It is interesting that in 1932 Bing broke all records while appearing at the Paramount in New York, and Russ was doing the same thing at the Brooklyn Paramount.

It wouldn't be fair to list Columbo as an imitator with the others, since Russ' career began at the same time as Bing's. As for comparing their styles, I would say Russ had a mellower voice, but Bing had greater range and was a more complete singer, being able to sing jazz as well as ballads. Many ponder—I for one—how Bing's career would have been affected had Columbo not died at age 26 following an accident. To my ears there was no equal to Crosby, but the movies are a visual medium, and Columbo's good looks and charm would have played a large role in a successful career in films as a romantic singer and whatever further success he might have had.

In summary, as Louis Armstrong inspired jazz musicians, Bing Crosby's footprint will remain throughout vocal history.

**Mike Kaptanis**

*(Editor: Many thanks, Mike. Perry Como admirers will probably not appreciate your comments that Perry was not an "exciting singer" and will highlight songs such as "Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes", "Temptation", "Hot Diggity" and "Ko-Ko-Mo". However, we are all entitled to an opinion!)*

# Bing's Rarest Records Revealed

**John Bassett is back with a challenge!**

I have been asked to contribute a few words identifying what I consider to be the rarest of Bing's commercially issued records, be it either in shellac or vinyl form.

Beginning with the earlier format, it was long thought that the US 12" Brunswick 78 of "Face the Music Medley", catalogue number 20106, deserved this appellation. During the 1960s, Ralph Harding revealed that as few as 17 copies were known to exist in Crosby collections throughout the world. A breakdown of this total showed that six copies were held in the UK, the owners at that time being Geoff Milne (1 copy), Frank Grant (2 copies), Les Phythian (1 copy) and Ralph himself (2 copies). Jean Paul Frereault of Montreal, Canada, also owned a copy. Three more copies were held in Australia and a further seven in the USA. Ralph conceded that others undoubtedly existed but these were not thought to be in Crosby collections. Furthermore, Colin Pugh almost certainly owned a copy which is now in the possession of Geoff Milne, and Brian Rust was known to have 'junked' a copy for a few cents during a visit to the States.

Brunswick
MADE IN U.S.A. U.S. PAT. 1,637,544
Radio with Panatrope, Radio, Records
Vocal Chorus by Fran Frey
Instrumental with Vocal Chorus
FACE THE MUSIC MEDLEY-Part II
"Manhattan Madness", "Let's Have Another Cup of Coffee", "I Say It's Spinach" and "Soft Lights and Sweet Music" (From Musical Revue "Face the Music"—Berlin—
VICTOR YOUNG & BRUNSWICK ORCHESTRA
20106
BRUNSWICK RADIO CORPORATION
U.S. PAT. OFFICE—M. DE F. MARCA INDUSTRIAL REGISTRATA

However, 20 years were to elapse before it became apparent that the title of "The World's Rarest Crosby 78" had been wrongly allocated.

Research undertaken by the Crosby Collectors Society in 1985 concluded that there were, in fact, *less* copies in existence of a UK-issued 78, the label of which concealed Bing's identity with a 'vocal chorus' tag and hid the musical accompanists behind the uninspired pseudonym of the "Ariel Dance Orchestra". The disc to which I refer is, of course, the 10" Ariel Grand Record,

catalogue number 4364, featuring the 1929 recording of "Susianna" with Sam Lanin and his Famous Orchestra.

A thorough investigation revealed that only five copies of this record are known to exist worldwide. In the UK, I am the owner of one copy, whilst a non-Bing collector named David Moore owns another. In 2016 a framed copy was auctioned in Angus, Scotland. Two copies are believed to be held in the States but their owners, Howard Levine and Jack Souther, are now sadly deceased and at the time of going to press the current owners of these records remain unknown.

It is a proven fact that neither Colin Pugh nor Ralph Harding possessed the Ariel although both were credited with having the largest Crosby collections in the UK. In 1996 Ralph generously offered me £200 for my copy but, needless to say, I graciously declined! Ralph was quite adamant when he stated in correspondence that the Ariel "is probably the rarest issue of Bing that exists", and in almost 25 years this claim has never been disputed.

Having identified the rarest shellac, we now turn our attention to the most elusive vinyl.

In a previous excursion into print I mentioned that I have been a collector of Crosbyana for over half a century. During that time I have amassed an impressive collection of over 1,000 LPs comprising issues from countries as far afield as Israel, Poland, Argentina and Japan.

When Colin Pugh was interviewed for the Australian magazine "The Crosby Voice" in 1989, he was asked if any particular items held pride of place amongst his own collection of 6,000 records. With barely any hesitation he cited two Russian albums on the Melodiya label. At the risk of sounding immodest, I hasten to add that I also possess these albums along with a further two issues on the same label, apparently overlooked by Colin at the time.

But despite the obvious rarity of anything by Bing emerging from Russia, my collection is still missing two albums, one from Australia and the other from America, both of which have eluded me for the best part of 50 years.

The Australian album, on Festival FL 30-965, is entitled "THE WILFRID THOMAS SHOW" and includes a short extract from an interview given by Bing in October 1960. I am indebted to Colin Pugh for providing me with a tape dubbing of this item, and whilst I have had the good fortune to see the album up for sale on two separate occasions, the asking price in each case has greatly exceeded my budget!

As for the American album, this falls into a league of its own, for it has never appeared in any auction or sales list and I very much doubt if any collector can honestly say that they own a copy. According to one source the record was issued on the World Horizon label by the Maryknoll Fathers of America. The catalogue number is MK-1001 and the album is entitled "SUNDAY IN HOLLYWOOD WITH ANN BLYTH AND BING CROSBY". It allegedly contains a 1955 interview given by Bing with Father Francis Caffrey, a well-known Roman Catholic priest. Despite its documentation in contemporary publications, a recent delve into the archives of the Maryknoll Fathers in New York has drawn a blank, suggesting that the LP is nothing more than a cleverly contrived hoax.

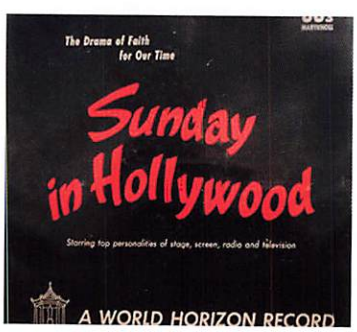
On the basis of this research, and assuming for argument sake that the album does exist, I name this singular LP as the world's rarest vinyl issue of Bing Crosby, and I challenge anybody to send me a tape or CD copy of the contents as proof of its existence.

I sincerely hope that this article serves to answer the many requests I have received seeking information on what is a very pertinent subject and I look forward to hearing from anyone wishing to donate copies of the two aforementioned albums to my (almost) complete collection!

**John Bassett**

*(Editor: I was intrigued by John's challenge as the "Sunday in Hollywood" album has passed through my hands at some stage. On it Bing chatted with Father Caffrey and then sang a few lines of "Whither Thou Goest". From what he said, I was able to tie the interview down to February 1955. I sold all my vinyl many years ago and the album must have gone with it. It's interesting to note that Gary Giddins refers to the interview in "A Pocketful of Dreams" (page 55 and see note 9). Further research has produced newspaper cuttings from January 1956. These show that Father Caffrey had borrowed a tape recorder to interview a prominent Japanese visitor and this went so well it was suggested that he approach people in the entertainment world about their unpublicised spiritual activities. Father Caffrey duly interviewed such stars as Perry Como, Danny Thomas, Loretta Young, and Ann Blyth as well as Bing. These interviews were edited to form 14 shows of approximately 28 minutes in length and these were offered free of charge to radio stations as well as school and parish groups.*

*Amazon.com has a record called "Sunday in Hollywood" on offer at https://www.amazon.com/Drama-Faith-Time-Sunday-Hollywood/dp/B07JPLB91Z.*




*Price $400!*

*If any of you have the record John seeks, please let me know. It would be nice to have a taping of the record which I could pass on to John.)*

*The record being offered by Amazon*

# Celluloid Crosby

**David Lobosco reviews one of the first Crosby films he ever saw.**

It is amazing how motion pictures can take you back to a different period in your life. For this review I had the pleasure of watching Bing's 1937 movie *Double or Nothing*. I had not seen the picture in over ten years, but it was one of the first I remember watching as a child. Back then I did not have the recordings Bing made for the film, so I had a handheld tape recorder which I held up to the television speaker to record the songs. It is amazing how far we have come in technology since then! When I was younger, I remember watching *Double or Nothing* and thinking it was a really fun movie. Seeing it now years later, it is just as much fun but I now have a better appreciation of the talent that was present.

The film had its premiere on September 1st, 1937 at the Paramount Theater in New York City. The picture begins with a stranger leaving wallets with a $100 bill in them all over the city. In the wallet is a return address. Not everyone returns the wallet, but four honest souls do. They include a performer who hopes to open up a night club (Bing), a two bit criminal/thief (William Frawley), an ex-burlesque dancer who is trying to stay on the right side of the road (Martha Raye), and a clueless buffoon (Andy Devine). Those four people go to the address where they were instructed. It ends up that an eccentric millionaire died, and he did not trust his family. What he did trust and believe in was the honesty of strangers. His lawyer tells the four confused people that they will get $5000 to keep. However, the first person who could double that sum within one month, through honest means, would inherit the millionaire's entire estate. Otherwise, the entire estate would go to the millionaire's greedy brother who is determined to thwart the plan.

Each of the four try their hand at doubling their money. However they are sabotaged by the millionaire's family which includes the greedy brother of the millionaire (Samuel Hinds), his wife (Fay Holden) and their beautiful daughter (Mary Carlisle). William Frawley loses his money very quick by listening to the greedy brother. Martha Raye tries her hand at opening a boat tour run by her old dancer friends. Unfortunately, when a particular song is played – "It's On, It's Off", Martha takes her clothes off so guess what happens on their opening night!

*Getting friendly with Martha Raye*

Andy Devine has what seems like a promising idea. He opens a little practice golf course charging 3 tickets for a dollar and offers $4000 to the first customer who can hole out in one. The sneaky brother brings in a golf pro to chip the ball in, but he cannot and Devine is close to doubling his money. At the very last minute though a drunk stumbles into the business and sinks a hole in one, so Andy Devine loses his money. Bing ends up being the only smart one! He wants to open a nightclub, and he rents premises from the millionaire's brother, but he eventually reads the fine print and sees that the nightclub building is only zoned for storage, so he buys the building next door to move the nightclub to on the night of opening. Shades of *Robin and the 7 Hoods*!

The film was shot quickly in Hollywood from April 26 to June 15, 1937 with Ted Reed directing, and even though the story was much better than previous lighthearted Bing Crosby romps, the big draw of the

movie was the music. Bing opened the film singing "Smarty" – which was written by Burton Lane and Ralph Freed strangely enough and not Bing's resident songwriters, Arthur Johnston and Johnny Burke. I love how Bing sang the song "Smarty" in the film, competing with an opera singing chef played by Ludovico Tomarchio. This is the song that I remember recording with my little handheld recorder. Johnston and Burke wrote a bunch of other Crosby gems for the film like: "The Moon Got in My Eyes", "It's the Natural Thing to Do", and my personal favorite – "All You Want to Do Is Dance". Unfortunately, Bing never commercially recorded a show stopping scat number called "After You". The song was written by Al Siegel and Sam Coslow, and in the film, it was sung by Bing, Martha Raye, Frances Faye, and Harry Barris. Frances Faye, who would emerge as a great jazz singer in the 1950s, played Martha Raye's sister for the quick musical number, and for a long time I thought they really were sisters. The number also marked the first time that Bing and ex-Rhythm Boy pal, Harry Barris, sang together on film since the Paul Whiteman opus *King of Jazz* in 1930. I wish Bing would have recorded the song "After You", and it looks like Tommy Dorsey and His Orchestra recorded the song, but it never became a hit.

The critics enjoyed the film, but for 1937 they were a little critical of Bing:

**The New York Times** - "It is a tuneful show with three numbers better than average—"It's the Natural Thing to Do", "It's On, It's Off" and "The Moon Got in My Eyes"—but a show which lacks buoyance and sparkle, perhaps because of unimaginative direction....Although Bing delivers five songs in his customary agreeable voice and makes a pleasant enough suitor for the fair Mary Carlisle, it is really the explosive Miss Raye, the madcap adagio dance team of Ames and Arno and the Calgary Brothers (specialists in inebriation) who provide the brighter moments."

**Variety** - "Bing Crosby and Martha Raye are teamed again in Double or Nothing which should give the film big first run sendoffs, as their names are potent on marquees. . . This is not the first time that Crosby has carried a heavy load on his broad shoulders. Point is, can he keep on doing it indefinitely? He is strictly a personality, just passing fair as an actor, but his croon is unique and the wide radio exploitation he has keeps him a valuable asset for theaters. He needs carefully selected vehicles in which his share of the entertainment obligations is limited to his particular talents. . . Value of the Crosby warble is dimmed because he sings in nearly every episode in which he appears. Some of it is so casual that his major effort near the end of the picture falls rather flat."

The film boasted a great cast of 1930s stars, and one of the most appealing aspect of Bing Crosby's 1930s movies were the ones in which he starred with Mary Carlisle. They definitely have movie chemistry, and in my opinion, Mary was one of the most beautiful actresses of the 1930s.

*Bing prepares to sing "It's the Natural thing to Do" to Mary Carlisle*

After seeing Martha Raye in this picture, I dug out an old CD I have of Martha's records. She recorded for Decca in the late 1930s, and her voice was much better than she was given credit for. She definitely had a way with a song. Harry Barris made an appearance as a bandleader as well. Every time I see Harry Barris in a Bing movie I feel sad because he was so talented, and yet because of his drinking Bing had to help him find work and put him in little roles. Harry Barris was so much more talented than the minor success he achieved.

Last time around I reviewed a very different movie with Bing's 1953 *Little Boy Lost*. *Double or Nothing* could not be more different a motion picture, but both movies really showcase Bing Crosby's greatness. With *Double or Nothing*, it not only showed Bing's growing command of the film screen, but also it showcased his ability to be a fine comedic actor. Bing was not then the superstar he would become in the 1940s, but with every screen role he would become more and more of a screen presence. *Double or Nothing* was a fun movie to watch, and they do not make pictures like that anymore!

**David Lobosco** *davidlobosco@yahoo.com*

*Editor: Many thanks, David. Gary Giddins liked the film too, writing:*

"...The stars, abetted by several specialty acts, provide an improbable number of diverting scenes in a film woodenly directed by Theodore Reed. This was his second Paramount film in a brief and negligible career, floated for a couple of years by the Henry Aldrich series (Paramount's answer to Andy Hardy). Not that Reed got much help from the quartet of credited scenarists, who probably never sat in the same room together. Yet the performers are engaging, as are the songs, including three by Burke and Johnston (the *Pennies from Heaven* team) and two by Ralph Freed (Harry Barris's partner on "Little Dutch Mill") and Burton Lane, who six years before had helped Bing choose his theme song. "Smarty," the upbeat opening number, was the first of several Lane songs Bing recorded.

Sam Coslow, who helped put Martha Raye on the map with "Mr. Paganini," wrote another showstopper for her this time around, "It's On, It's Off," her character's theme song from her days in burlesque Every time she

hears it, she begins to strip. Frank Tuttle once described Maggie as a "combination of Marie Dressler and Fanny Brice. She appeals to the down-to-the-earth fans and the sophisticates." Even the Hays Office approved, relieved that there was no "undue exposure," though Australian censors deleted a shot of a padlock on Raye's dress. The strip number was treated with a uranium-tone azure, the first time since the silent era that Paramount had used tinting. MGM and Fox also experimented with tints in period, but after *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and the rise of Technicolor the practice was discontinued for good.

In compliance with Bing's demand not to be advertised as the "sole star," the studio top-billed him and Raye, a departure from custom, as she was not his romantic interest. The reviewers were generally content, and the picture was a nationwide hit, yielding three top Crosby records: "The Moon Got in My Eyes" (a chart-topper) in which he effortlessly finesses a profusion of awkward *oo* and long-*I* diphthongs; "It's the Natural Thing to Do," with its singspiel interlude typifying Bing's *KMH* personality; and "Smarty," an insolently buoyant yet amusingly nuanced swinger. All were recorded at his first session with Trotter.

*Double or Nothing* is studded with personal references and jokes. The marriage of high and low that came to define *KMH* is evident as Bing swings "Smarty" in a diner while a chef bawls opera. Bing's love of silent comedy is manifest in a scene in which he sets his straw hat on fire to attract Carlisle's attention, a scene played at a leisurely tempo. As Mary's mother, Fay Holden reads *Hobo Harry's Revenge* to learn the lingo of lowlifes. Martha Raye interjects "Muddy Water" while belting "Listen My Children, And You Shall Hear." Mike Pecarovitch has a walk-on (as in *Waikiki Wedding*). Exceedingly strange vaudeville acts are interpolated. Bing's character's ambition is to open a nightclub, for which he hires a Singband - an all-girl choir dressed in tight black-satin dresses, scatting melodies conducted by Harry Barris (the first of his many bit parts in Crosby films). When Bing and Raye do their own scat number, Harry joins in for a few measures, closing with a Rhythm Boys *hahh!*"

(Gary Giddins, *A Pocketful of Dreams*, pages 483-484)

# One Sweet Letter from You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters and emails received since the last issue.

**Carmela Amari**, *Staten Island, New York, USA*

In the past two issues of BING, a lot has been said about *Top o' the Morning*. I guess I like the film more than most. I love the songs and the way Bing sings them – especially "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling" and "The Donovans". The latter is very entertaining in the movie – Bing and Barry singing and dancing! I love the parts in the movie where Biddy predicts, Bing and Barry interact, and the party. The party because it reminds me of Irish neighbors I had in Brooklyn who had great parties. Anyway, I urge everyone to have another look at this movie. I thought it was very enjoyable and I'm not even Irish! I enjoyed David Lobosco's review of the movie. Did you know that David and I had grandfathers who looked like Peter Boyle of *Everybody Loves Raymond*?

---

**Richard Muirhead**, *by email from East Calder, West Lothian, Scotland, UK*

Very sorry to learn that Wig Wiggins had passed. A name associated with ICC for many years, a loss indeed.

I do enjoy Anton's series of articles re Bing's later albums. Top of my list for makeover and CD release is "Hey Jude/Hey Bing", not to everyone's taste it seems but I loved it albeit not the best recording sonically, maybe remastering could improve it. I bought it when I was around 15 in a record store in Sheerness, Isle of Sheppey when I was on holiday with my parents, brother and grandparents. Unfortunately I'm the only one left now, how time flies.

Listened to the recording of "White Christmas" from the forthcoming album on Spotify. Must say I was a bit disappointed with the quality of the Bing vocal, seems a bit muffled and too much echo. Hopefully the rest of the tracks will be better. These type of compilations with orchestra overlay are a bit hit or miss in my view, some work very well - the Buddy Holly one last year was superb. We'll see.

---

**David Currington**, *by email from Turramurra, New South Wales, Australia.*

I thought the latest magazine was a particularly good one. I wasn't so sure of the new layout last issue but I find I really like it, punctuated as it is with interesting photos.

Some articles, I must admit – such as Nathaniel's current golfing activities – I've just skimmed, but there are some meaty ones which are real value. Discographical studies and detailed coverage of Bing's activities are just great.

News of two issued "I've Got the Girl" takes and "Our Last Hawaiian Moon" recording was very exciting. Among Gordon Wall's collection, which I have, there is one and possibly a couple of 78s of the former. I'll need to set myself up so that I can play them to see if we strike gold. I'll let you know.

Sad to read what was Wig's farewell in the magazine. I know that Michael flew over for his funeral, which was indeed good of him. Without Wig's input and assistance, quite a few projects would not have come about, or would have been poorer without his input. I doubt if the *Harry Lillis* CD series would have come about if he had not guaranteed and effected distribution of the discs.

I bought a number of Bing DVDs from an organisation in America in the hope that I might be able to improve on the quality of a number of my movies (such as *The Big Broadcast, Tops Is the Limit, Dr. Cook's Garden...*) but that was an expensive, fruitless exercise.

And speaking of dashed hopes, how very, very disappointed I was to read of your unsuccessful brush with the "Hey Jude" tapes. Those sessions are the ones which I would most dearly love to have. Actually, master tapes are required to give a good mix; something which the released LP is lacking. Overall the songs really appeal to me, but the poor sound mix and balance let it down.

---

**Perry Huntoon**, *by email from Naperville, Illinois, USA*

I haven't finished reading the new issue, but I have two comments.

1. The reprint of the September 11, 1975 article from *The Listener* was particularly interesting and revealing. It also implies that Bing had a hit in 1973 with *Tie A Yellow Ribbon*. While I am certainly familiar with Bing's recording as a single on Daybreak Records, I had no idea that it charted. It was a blockbuster hit for Tony Orlando & Dawn but I can find no evidence that it also charted for Bing either in the USA or in England. Can you confirm?

2. Lorne Harasen's look at the Fabulous Dorseys was also quite entertaining but he states that Ken Curtis replaced Frank Sinatra in Tommy's band. Wikipedia also states that Curtis "succeeded Frank Sinatra as vocalist until Dick Haymes contractually replaced Sinatra in 1942." This is incorrect. Ken was featured on only one Dorsey recording date, that of September 26, 1941. Of eight sides recorded that day, including two by Sinatra, Curtis recorded "Love Sends a Little Gift of Roses" with the Pied Pipers and an unissued version of "The Anniversary Waltz." That was the extent of Ken's association with Tommy Dorsey. A year later, on September 3, 1942, Sinatra made his farewell appearance with the band in Indianapolis where he introduced Dick Haymes as his replacement on the air. Following that engagement, the band immediately traveled to Hollywood where, on September 8, Haymes was in place as male vocalist on the "Tommy Dorsey Raleigh-Kool Show" broadcast that evening on NBC.

*(Editor: Bing's recording of "Tie a Yellow Ribbon" was a hit on BBC radio with Terry Wogan (the interviewer in the article) playing it constantly as did other BBC presenters. Unfortunately that did not translate into chart success).*

**Frans van der Kolff**, *by email from Apeldoornm The Netherlands*

Thanks for the new issue of BING magazine, which I enjoyed reading very much - as usual, I might add. It's good to learn that it will be possible to issue three issues in 2020.

I was pleased to see you found a place for my article on The Charioteers. Thank you again for your helpful and interesting additions. I am still surprised that there seem to be no photos of The Charioteers performing with Bing. As I see photos of Bing with other artists on his radio shows in abundance on the internet, I really am at a loss why there are no images of him with The Charioteers.

I like the new magazine layout, although in my opinion there was not much wrong with the earlier layout. I read somewhere someone proposed the use of a sans serif font, as on page 2 of the magazine. I have no problem reading the texts, but I do believe using a sans serif font will help you to fit more text into the magazine - should you wish to do so, of course.

What interesting articles, about newly discovered recordings! I thoroughly enjoyed reading these - even as it turned out some of the information could be dismissed as 'false alarm'. It's also amazing what you can find on YouTube, if you search regularly. OK, not always something really new but it's quite often one comes across material that is out of the ordinary. Like recently happened with a video of 'It's Christmas', from the 'Christmas Sing with Bing' radio specials. It would really be something when the songs from these programmes would be released on CD one day. Funny that - as far as I know - not even fans have undertaken to explore this treasure trove of material. A future idea for Sepia, perhaps?

'Bing at Christmas' is in my opinion a wonderful addition to the Crosby catalogue. Most reviews seem to be favourable. Even though I am at a loss with some people who feel the recordings are loud and noisy, drowning Bing's voice in other vocals or the orchestrations. Although I say to each his own taste, it makes one think how some control (or don't control) the settings of their audio equipment. Have you noticed that the CD has been No. 1 in Amazon's Christmas music sellers for quite a long time already? Good to see Bing's music brought back into the public eye, ehm... ear!

*(Editor: Many thanks Frans for the suggestion of a sans-serif font. I discussed this with Debbie our printer and she kindly ran off some pages from the last magazine using sans-serif. The space savings were rather minimal and I have to say that I preferred the original. So we'll stay as we are for the time being but I am very grateful for your thoughts.)*

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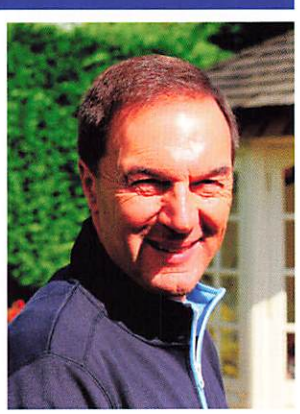
**Bill Clark**, *by email from Sheffield Village, Ohio, USA*

My 2019 ICC membership came about in, perhaps, an unusual way. It was through the courtesy, friendship, and generosity of one of your devoted members, Edward Sturrup, a transplanted Britisher. In 2018 I was the national president of the Naval Minewarfare Association, a group composed of men who had served the US Navy aboard either a minesweeper or a minelayer. Our organization was doomed by our advancing ages (79 deaths in 2018) and we decided to hold one last 5-day convention in New Orleans and reluctantly close our doors. Edward's company, Tour Trends, had been utilized in helping us plan previous conventions and was asked to do a repeat performance for our final event. This required frequent contacts between us for several months.

One of our all-day field trips at the convention was at the National WWII Museum, including lunch at their Stage Door Canteen with a "Best of Sinatra" stage show. After the show I said to Edward, "That was good, but I must confess that Frankie was never my favorite. I've been a dedicated Bing Crosby fan all my life and Sinatra doesn't compare." Edward responded that he completely agreed and we later exchanged memories of Bing's works by email. Edward sent me a copy of the second biography concentrating on the war years – particularly pertinent to me as a WWII veteran. Then my friend went beyond the bounds of normal friendship by paying my 2019 membership to a previously unknown organization, the ICC, and arranged for me to receive all three copies of BING, despite the fact that the spring issue had already been distributed. Your "Bing immersion" has won me over – I've just renewed my membership for 2020!

# Crosbyana

**Ken Crossland wonders whether Everything Old Is New Again.**



When Bing graced the London Palladium stage during his last summer of 1977, he included a regular duet spot in the act, with his wife, Kathryn. One song was a new one, "Everything Old Is New Again" written by Peter Allen and Carole Bayer Sager. I remember it as much for the repartee between Bing and Kathryn before they sang. Kathryn complimented Bing on his tuxedo, with Bing responding that it was something he "threw together for the [Presidential] Inaugural. "Carter?" asked Kathryn. "Roosevelt", said Bing. "FDR?" said Kathryn. "Teddy", said Bing, which then provided a neat entry to the song about old things finding their time once again.

The song has always struck me as ongoing commentary

*Bing and Kathryn sing "Everything Old Is New Again" at the Palladium.*

to the life of a record and music collector. It seems that for as long as I can remember, I have been using "new" technology to convert old things into new. Back in the Seventies, it was my fledgling 78-rpm collection, transferred first onto reel to reel tapes, then onto the new invention of cassettes. In the Eighties, it was LPs, transferred to the sadly short-lived mini-discs, and then the Nineties brought the endless tasks of converting Betamax videos (I backed the wrong horse) to VHS, and then in turn, VHS videos to DVDs.

Now, in the brave new world of the 2020s, DVDs feel about as modern as Teddy Roosevelt, and once again I find myself in the transfer business, this time, from DVD to computer, iPhone and iPad. To be fair, it's not that new a phenomenon, rather something that has been asking to be done for about a decade or more. But for some reason, this winter, its time came. It's a laborious and time consuming process, although mercifully, it has some built in short cuts and significant benefits at the end. You can, for example, edit a 60-minute TV show down just to the bits that interest you, and once done, it's nice to be able to watch your new creation, literally at your fingertips, on any device you happen to have in your hand.

But there is another even more significant benefit, which just happens to show that the song runs true - everything old is new again. Back in the Sixties, the then editors of BING, Frank Murphy and Reg Bristo, would often include an update on Bing's TV activity, usually at the Hollywood Palace, and including some mesmerising details of the songs that he sang. Pre-internet and video, there was zero chance of the UK readership ever getting to see these moments, although from time to time, TV soundtrack recordings would be issued by the club. 7" discs at 33 rpm, these were mini-LPs with dreadfully thin and muffled sound, Bing's voice often drowned

out by the orchestra. How we envied our American counterparts, watching, we imagined, Bing week in, week out, singing the hits of the Sixties.

Fast forward - or maybe slow forward is more accurate - 50 years and many of these Hollywood Palace moments are now readily accessible on YouTube. What becomes apparent is that for some of the songs, particularly those that involved some element of dancing or movement, Bing reverted to his favoured practice of recording the vocal ahead of the filming and then lip-syncing during the dance routine, just the way he used to do in real Hollywood. The result is often a wonderful Crosby vocal, captured in good sound and free from any of the distractions that go with singing on a TV set stage.

Two particular songs leapt out to me this winter. "Ob-la-di, Ob-la-da" and "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang" never struck me as obvious Crosby songs and I was intrigued that he should have featured them on the Hollywood Palace for several reasons. Both were undeniably contemporary, with a strong beat, fast paced rhythm and intricate lyrics, but one was a Beatles song that surely had some story concealed away in its almost nursery-rhyme lyric, and the other was a film song, with the true star of the film being a vintage car.

On reflection, perhaps I should not have been surprised. Bing always had an affinity with a fast paced song with a complicated lyric, just reference "Them There Eyes", first recorded in 1930 and still part of the Crosby medley in 1977. His versions of the new Sixties songs are outstanding. "Ob-la-di, Ob-la-da" came up first, recorded for the Hollywood Palace show which aired on 1 March 1969. Bing was in fine, mellow voice and included one or two trademark pieces of Crosby phrasing in his interpretation of the Paul McCartney song. And it turns out that there is more to the song than its simple story. Paul McCartney wrote it in India in 1968, and even though the working arrangement behind the Beatles meant that everything he or John Lennon wrote always came out as "Lennon & McCartney", both Lennon and George Harrison had nothing but derision for the song. McCartney wrote is as a tongue-in-cheek nod to the Jamaican ska style of music, which preceded reggae and "Desmond", the lead character in the song, was intended to be Desmond Dekker, one of the leading exponents of reggae.

*Singing with Sally Ann Howes*

The title phrase was lifted from the stage act of Jimmy Scott-Emuakpor, a Nigerian Conga player, who was an acquaintance of McCartney, and indeed who later (unsuccessfully) sought a share of the writing credits. What prompted Bing to include in the Hollywood Palace show is a mystery because in the USA, the Beatles own version was never more than an album track (at least until a decade later when it was re-released).

"Chitty Chitty Bang Bang" appeared in the next Hollywood Palace show that aired on 5 April 1969 and this time, the reason for its inclusion is more apparent. Star guest that night was Sally Ann Howes, who co-starred with Dick Van Dyke in the version of "Chitty", then on cinema release. She joins Bing in the tail end of the song, which serves as the show's opener and is used in part, to introduce the evening's guests. Bing again shows ease and comfort with the song, and again introduces his inimitable phrasing to the vocal gymnastics that the song's lyric demands (it was written by Robert and Richard Sherman, whose credits included the ultimate in vocal dexterity in "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" from their *Mary Poppins* score).

Still on the theme of "Everything Old Is New Again", just before Christmas, I found myself with an unexpected dilemma. Ever since our editor, Malcolm, turned up at my home one night in 1987 with a newly-invented CD player under his arm, I have always bought anything new on CD rather than vinyl, where such a choice was presented. Much as I love my collection of records, I never expected that I would find myself re-running that LP or CD debate, but when "Bing at Christmas" appeared last year, that is exactly what happened. Vinyl's comeback has been remarkable to the extent that HMV have just opened a vinyl warehouse in my nearest city. I do like the warmth that comes from vinyl, in contrast to the clinical chill that CDs can exhibit, and what's more, I love my vinyl sleeves and the whole act of placing a disk on a turntable, lowering the stylus and waiting for the magic to unfold. Against that, CDs are seemingly indestructible, infinitely more flexible in terms of music selection and free of the inevitable bit of hiss and crackle that accompanies a vinyl disc, no matter how many times you clean it.

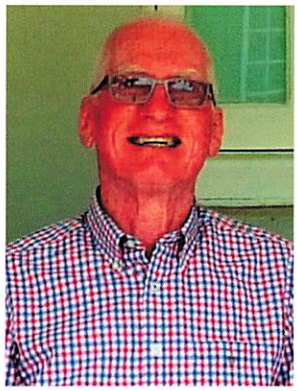
So, "Bing at Christmas", vinyl or CD? I plumped for vinyl, only to discover that one track seemed to have a flaw in the pressing that seemed to muffle the vocal. It was back to the bad old days. I replaced the LP and the new one was just the same. Some things about the old are still old, it seems. Come the post-Christmas sales, a significantly reduced-price CD offered itself, none other than in the HMV vinyl warehouse. If CDs are capable of sitting there with a smug grin on their face, thumbing their noses to their vinyl neighbours, my "Bing at Christmas" CD is probably guilty as charged.

**Ken Crossland** *ken54@blueyonder.co.uk*

*(Editor: For more information about Bing's appearances on the Hollywood Palace, have a look at http://www.bingmagazine.co.uk/bingmagazine/BingTV.htm)*

# A Note from Australia

**Graham Pascoe brings us up-to-date with the news from "down under".**



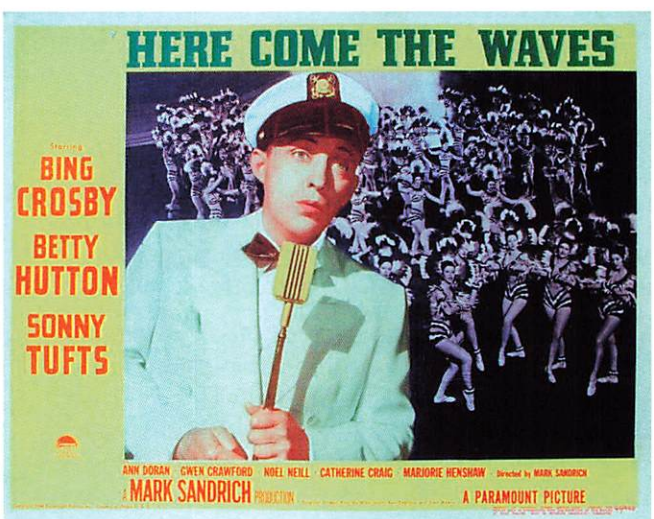
Thanks to the release of the Decca CD *Bing At Christmas*, Australian media gave unprecedented attention to Bing Crosby in December. It began with a full page story 'Remembering Bing Crosby' in the national magazine *New Idea*. Readers were promised that Mary Crosby 'reveals all about her famous father'. Before the end of the month *The Sydney Morning Herald* ran a two-page recollection of Christmas albums including Bing's latest with special attention to his duet with David Bowie, promoted with a photo of them captioned 'When Bing met Bowie. THE INSIDE STORY' above the mast head on page one. Then the national newspaper *The Australian* put Bing at the head of 'the folk imagination that can bowl us over at Christmas', illustrating its feature story with a picture of Bing's *Merry Christmas* CD with a bonus track of 'The Small One', an appropriate reference because Bing's last appearance on Australia's album charts had been that CD in December 1996, for one week. The new CD was in our charts throughout December, reaching 30th place.

Malcolm's 'Old Clippings' in the last issue of *BING* described some results of his continuing research which found many interesting references to Bing and his family in local media when he was a lad in Spokane. I wondered when the Australian media first considered Bing Crosby sufficiently newsworthy to devote some editorial space or time to him, as distinct from mentioning him in reviews of his films or records. Of course, when I was doing my research some years ago I didn't expect to find any evidence of that during the years he lived in Spokane (and I didn't look for any).

As the 1930s were about to commence the name of Bing Crosby would have meant little, if anything, to most Australians. Although they had been able to buy a total of forty-five Columbia, HMV and Parlophone records on which Bing's voice could be heard on fifty-five songs, the labels on many of the records did not name him as a vocalist. By the end of 1932 Bing had appeared on our big screens but his marriage to Dixie Lee in 1930 had not been reported and I found no mention of Gary's birth in 1933.

In March 1934 *The Australian Music Maker* and *Dance Band News* printed an article titled 'Musicians in the camera's eye' which included a photo of Bing with a caption to the effect that he 'had forsaken the talkies at the height of his popularity because he likes radio work better'. That suggestion must have seemed incredible to many as they had seen him featured in three movies (*The Big Broadcast, College Humour* and *Too Much Harmony*) in less than twelve months. In August of that year, the same publication printed what Gary Giddins described on page 434 of his 'Early Years' biography of Bing as Paramount's 'opus' under the title 'Bing Crosby's life story: Written by himself'. It was a one and a half page story as supposedly told by Bing and Dixie. In Giddins' words, in this story 'a real person is made to seem fictional'. Nevertheless, it's undoubtedly the first time a 'news story' about Bing appeared here.

Ten years later as New Yorkers were able to see the premiere of *Here Come the Waves*, Australians probably believed they knew a great deal about Bing Crosby. The '75 Years Ago' section of the last issue of BING reported *Variety's* comments on the film but it was July 1945 before it opened simultaneously in Sydney and Melbourne. The music magazine *Tempo* gave it some advance publicity, undoubtedly arranged by Paramount. 'Are you hep?' it asked its readers. It was running a 'Where from?' competition offering photographs of Bing to five 'hep' winners. 'Where from?' it explained, with typical publicist's licence, was a game invented by Bing, Sonny Tufts and Betty Hutton, and readers had to identify the movies from which sixteen Crosby songs had originated. The songs ranged from 'Love in Bloom' to 'Sunday, Monday or Always' and 'If You Please'.


HERE COME THE WAVES
BING CROSBY
BETTY HUTTON
SONNY TUFTS
ANN DORAN · GWEN CRAWFORD · NOEL NEILL · CATHERINE CRAIG · MARJORIE HENSHAW · Directed by MARK SANDRICH
A MARK SANDRICH PRODUCTION
A PARAMOUNT PICTURE

Reviewers' opinions of *Here Come the Waves* were not similar. In Melbourne The Herald didn't agree with the cinema's ad which promised a 'BING BANG BEAUTIFUL MUSICAL'. 'While Hollywood continues to produce these musical farces against a services background there'll always be a British film industry ... inaccurate portrayals of the lighter side of the war. Bing Crosby is disappointing after his recent successes.' *The Sydney Morning Herald* told its readers 'The Waves (American equivalent of Australia's Wrans) are ruled not by Britannia, but by Crosby. In this film Crosby is happy to move, second and carry unanimously a motion of confidence in himself as America's No. 1 crooner, and he does it with all the mildest of manners.' *Here Come the Waves* ran for seven weeks in Melbourne and six week's at Sydney's largest cinema, the Capitol which seated 2773 patrons.

It was not until the next February when Bing's records of the songs from the film were in the shops. The disc with 'Ac-cent-tchu-ate the Positive' backed by 'There's a Fellow Waiting in Poughkeepsie' was successful. 'Critic' writing in *Music Maker* thought the record 'is an excellent example of the polished teamwork of this combination', referring to Bing, the Andrews Sisters and Vic Schoen. When 'Matrix' reviewed the record in the *Listener In* readers were told that it 'deserves your patronage ... despite the fact that radio broadcasts per the medium of imported discs have given the tune a little too much advance plugging'. (That would explain how 'Ac-cent-tchu-ate' became a chart hit in October 1945, reaching number two spot during its six-month stay and was ranked by musicologist David Kent at number eleven in his twenty-five top songs of 1945.) 'Poughkeepsie' also reached the charts but not until February 1946. It was not too much plugging for Crosby admirers as it was Bing's second-best-selling record in 1946. ('Just a Prayer Away' was his top seller of the year.)

The second record with 'Let's Take the Long Way Home' and 'I Promise You' gave Bing two more chart hits. Like the first record, the Crosby chart success in this country was shared by other artists. Johnny Mercer and the Jack Payne orchestra had made recordings of 'Ac-cent-tchu-ate' although Mercer's record was unavailable in Australia so Australians probably heard imported records on their radios. Payne had a record of 'I Promise You' and HMV discs by Dinah Shore and Artie Shaw were also on sale.

*Variety* had commented on Bing's 'delicious rib on Frank Sinatra' in *Here Come the Waves*. It did not go un-noticed in Sydney where the aforementioned review of the film included 'The Sinatra legend of swooners and mobbings is guyed mercilessly'.

David Lobosco's 'Celluloid Crosby' took us into the 1950s and his love of *Little Boy Lost* and admiration of Bing's acting is, as our editor notes, 'well said'. The film did not reach Australia until March 1954 although in October 1952 the music magazine *Tempo* had given it page one treatment in a story headed 'Gay Paree to get Bing'. Bing would go to Paris to film *Little Boy Lost* it said although he had left USA in September. *The Sydney*

A PERLBERG-SEATON PRODUCTION
LITTLE BOY LOST
BING CROSBY
CLAUDE DAUPHIN
WITH CHRISTIAN FOURCADE AS THE LITTLE BOY
PRODUCED BY WILLIAM PERLBERG
DIRECTED BY GEORGE SEATON
WRITTEN FOR THE SCREEN BY GEORGE SEATON
BASED UPON THE STORY "LITTLE BOY LOST" BY MARGHANITA LASKI
NEW SONGS - LYRICS BY JOHNNY BURKE
MUSIC BY JAMES VAN HEUSEN
A PARAMOUNT PICTURE

*Morning Herald* was even more tardy when its Women's Section reported in November that 'Bing is in Paris, starring in the film version of Marghanita Laski's story *Little Boy Lost*. The story ... has been a good deal altered to suit Bing's style. But he has only two songs to sing'.

Melbourne's State Theatre screened it for five weeks, an impressive run in the nation's largest cinema. The last four Crosby films to appear there were *The Emperor Waltz, A Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (the title for Australian screenings), *Top o' the Morning* and *Riding High* and had lasted either three or four weeks. The review in *The Herald* must have helped: 'Bing can always be relied upon in straight parts as a tear-jerker, and this is no exception ... a sensitive charming film'. In Sydney the Prince Edward advertised it towards the end of March as 'a picture you'll never forget ... this is Bing at his dramatic best ... as you've never seen him before'. It ran for six weeks after the reviewer for *The Sun-Herald* told readers of its 'distinguished sentimentality ... Bing Crosby, though still singing a song or two, is presented as a dramatic actor ... he is, of course, capable only of sentimental melancholy - and it is likeable enough, in its way'.

Two Burke-Van Heusen songs from the film had been released on the Columbia label the previous November. *Record Guide* described 'The Magic Window' and 'Cela M'est Egal (If It's All the Same to You)' as charming songs and *Tempo* liked the tunes but not the lyrics. Australian record buyers couldn't have thought much of them as they were deleted from the catalogue in 1954 after selling less than three thousand copies. In terms of lifetime sales, Bing's best-selling Australian record from 1953 was the disc with 'The Isle of Innisfree' which sold almost 20,000 copies. A 10-inch Columbia LP was pressed in 1955 with four songs from *Little Boy Lost* and *The Country Girl* and this enabled Crosby fans to buy 'A Propos De Rien (All About Nothing)' and 'Violets and Violins'.

David was able to watch the film in the 1980s. Australians who missed it at their cinemas in the 1950s didn't have to wait that long to see it on television. It was first shown in 1965 and repeated every few years during the next fifteen years.

Martin McQuade's research turned up an 'intriguing claim' concerning the lyrics of 'Galway Bay'. When Australians heard Bing's recording of that song they were willing to put their hands in their pockets to buy those Decca discs in large numbers. Backed by 'My Girl's An Irish Girl' it reached the shops in November 1948, about one year after Bing recorded them. It was reviewed in *Tempo* the following month and Victor Young's accompaniment earned special praise and it's not surprising that a Sydney schoolboy chose to sing 'Galway Bay' in his school's talent quest in 1951. (He won!) By then it had sold about 45,000 records and by 1955 almost 71,000 had moved off the shelves. Both songs were chart hits in Australia for forty-five weeks. That was in a time when records by popular singers were not lasting as long as they had 'in the old days'. The record even outsold Bing's 'McNamara's Band'

which had been released in 1947 and became Bing's best seller of that year's releases with lifetime sales of almost thirty thousand. In 1956 'Galway Bay' was re-issued on a Festival 45 and, not surprisingly, turned up on several compilations on LPs in later years.

One of the interesting consequences of making contact with other Crosby devotees, to me at least, is learning about their 'discovery' of Bing's talents and their search for examples of Bing's productivity. When I read Ken Crossland's 'Crosbyana' column in the last issue of *BING* and his search for records with a 'wants' ad in a magazine in the 1960s I was reminded of a hunt for a particular Crosby record some three decades earlier. In the early 1930s, a man who was to become the president of what was probably the first enduring Crosby club in Australia decided that he must get all of Bing's recordings. He was Douglas Black, a resident of Adelaide, the capitol of South Australia. His study of the record companies' matrix numbers enabled him to identify early recordings on which Bing received no label credit. When Black learned that the 'vocal refrain' on the 1929 Parlophone record of 'If I Had You' was by Bing Crosby, he advertised in the newspapers to buy a copy of it. After he rode his motorcycle to a seaside suburb one wet night to buy the disc he was chuffed when the sympathetic owner of the record gave it to him. The first official meeting of that Crosby club was held in Adelaide in April 1945. It lasted until 1949. Black was an announcer with radio station 5KA and presented a regular program which featured Crosby recordings. His programs were introduced by a recorded message from Bing to his South Australian fans.

**Graham Pascoe** *gpascoe34@bigpond.com*

*(Editor: Graham continues to present his show 'Morning Music' on community radio station 2MCE-FM each Monday morning from 9 to 11 (Australian Eastern Time). Usually he plays recordings of popular music from the 1930s, 40s and 50s but he invariably plays a couple of Crosby recordings. The station broadcasts on 92.3 FM in Bathurst, New South Wales and its programmes are streamed (but not archived) on www.2mce.org. )*

# Bing on the Box

## TV Highlights - USA & Canada

Lots of Bing's films have been seen on TV since our last issue was prepared and these included:

| | |
|---|---|
| Alias Jesse James | TCM |
| Going My Way | TCM |
| Happy Holidays with Bing and Frank | Fox Nation |
| High Society | TCM |
| High Time | FXM |
| My Favorite Brunette | TCM |
| Road to Morocco | TCM |
| Road to Utopia | TCM |
| Robin and the 7 Hoods | TCM |
| That's Entertainment | TCM |
| The Bells of St. Mary's | TCM |
| The Princess and the Pirate | TCM |
| White Christmas (many showings) | AMC |
| White Christmas | Sundance |

**Malcolm Macfarlane surveys the TV and radio scene of the last four months.**

Great work from TCM as usual but the big news was ***The Black Friday White Christmas 24-Hour Marathon*** on getTV with all of Bing's Christmas shows from 1971 being shown one after the other on a loop all day.

The shows were:

1971 - Bing Crosby and The Sounds Of Christmas

1972 - Christmas with The Bing Crosby's

1973 - Bing Crosby's Sun Valley Christmas Show

1974 - Christmas with the Bing Crosby's

1975 - Merry Christmas, Fred, from the Crosbys

1976 - Bing Crosby's White Christmas

1977 - Bing Crosby's Merrie Olde Christmas

*Christmas with the Bing Crosby's (1972)*

Jon Oye has put together a montage of screen shots from the shows and we have used this as our back cover this time around. Greg Van Beek watched all the shows too and commented:

*"All have been edited, unfortunately. A few that come to mind...gone in 1973 is the Christmas Star sketch, 1974 is missing the Camaraderie number, 1975 is missing "A Couple of Song & Dance Men" and the "Pick Yourself Up" number Fred (Mary Frances and Astaire), 1976 is missing the Johnny Mercer medley and Bernadette's "One", 1977 lost the Bowie solo and the Stanley Baxter Hope impersonation. I listened to the audio tape I had of the 1972 Christmas special and the school nativity sketch with Sally Struthers and the Crosby kids was cut from the GET TV airing, including Bing singing "Some Children See Him". But that seems to be the only one of Bing's vocals that was cut."*

All of the shows were broadcast again on Christmas Eve and it's great to see these specials being shown. It has to be admitted however that some parts of the shows do not hold up particularly well when viewed with 21st century eyes but nevertheless it's a pity that so many items had to be omitted.

Greg also told me about a PBS special that made its debut on November 16 called "My Music: A Classic Christmas" which included Bing's 1963 performance of "Do You Hear What I Hear" from the Bob Hope show along with the finale from the movie *White Christmas*. The Bing and Bowie duet was also included.

It was wonderful to hear Bing's version of "Blue Skies" at the beginning of the first episode of *Star Trek: Picard* on Amazon Prime. No theme tune, just Bing singing. It was an outstanding opening to the series.

## USA & Canadian Radio

**Arne Fogel's** long-running weekly radio program "The Bing Shift" continues on Sundays at 7 p.m. (CST) on KBEM-FM "JAZZ 88" (88.5 FM) in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota. It can now be accessed on demand at **http://www.jazz88.fm/show/the-bing-shift/** and it's always enjoyable with an eclectic selection. Arne's near-encyclopedic knowledge and admiration of his subject is impressive and contagious.

His program really should not be missed and as an example, here's the playlist for his January 19 show in which he started off by comparing different versions of songs sung by Bing.

*Arne Fogel*

Ain't Misbehavin' (two versions) – Way Down Yonder in New Orleans (two versions) – Carolina in the Morning (two versions) – At the Flying "W" – I Apologize – Bonne Nuit – The Calinda – Copacabana – At Last

**Greg Van Beek's** weekly radio series Nostalgia Radio Time has continued its long run, albeit at different times on new stations. Greg always has a "Bing Sings" segment in the hour-long program. On December 20, he broadcast his 18th annual Bing Crosby Christmas special with a heavy emphasis on the new hit release on Decca "Bing at Christmas". The tracks played were as follows.

Sleigh Ride (LSO) - Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas (LSO) - It's Christmas (1959) - Christmas Medley with Rosemary Clooney (1960) - The Christmas Song (with The Tenors and LSO) - Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow! (LSO) - Round and Round the Christmas Tree (1970) - The White World of Winter (1965) - Do You Hear What I Hear? (LSO) - Little Drummer Boy with David Bowie (LSO) - I'll Be Home for Christmas (LSO) - The Old Man / Gee I Wish I Was Back in the Army (with Danny Kaye - 1954) - How Lovely Is Christmas (1957) - 12 Days of Christmas (with the Andrews & Puppini Sisters & LSO) - Jingle Bells (with the Andrews & Puppini Sisters & LSO) - Winter Wonderland (LSO) - Snow (with Peggy Lee, Danny Kaye, Trudy Stevens - 1954) - It's Christmas Time Again (with Fred Waring - 1964) - A Time to Be Jolly (1970) - White Christmas (with Pentatonix & LSO)

Greg is now heard online each Sunday at 9 AM (ET) over New York's 920 WON: The Apple **www.mixlr.com/920-won-the-apple/** and each Saturday at 10 AM (ET) streaming over YUSA red on the Yesterday USA Super Station at **http://www.yesterdayusa.com/** Each Sunday the show from the previous week is uploaded in Podcast form at: **https://nostalgiaradiotime.podomatic.com/** where you'll find nearly a full year of the shows available on demand 24/7!

**Crosby Internet Radio** has continued to broadcast 24/7 with a wide variety of shows including some of Arne Fogel's excellent "Bing Shift" programs. The shows change on a monthly basis with the 15-minute 1954-56 show typically running throughout the day with other programs such as the KMH, Philco, Chesterfield and GE shows being interleaved every hour or so. The Crosby-Clooney shows are used frequently too. Bing's Christmas shows were featured during the period from Thanksgiving to Christmas.

In the past I have mentioned the **Star Spangled Radio** Hour broadcasts which are available on cruisin1430. The station has barred access to people from Europe for some time but one of the presenters, Dennis M. Spragg, now has his own site, at which he has a duplicate of the broadcasts. The shows mainly concentrate on Glenn Miller but there is a significant amount from Bing. On September 28, there was a special broadcast looking at Glenn Miller in Europe and included in this were GI Journal No. 69 (17/11/44 - featuring Bing, Joan Blondell, Jimmy Durante, Mel Blanc, Pat Friday, the Charioteers), extracts from Variety Bandbox of August 27, 1944 (poor quality but very rare) and the entire broadcast of the American Band of the AEF show from August 31, 1944 with Bing and Glenn Miller. The last named show is not great quality either but well worth hearing.

Also the Kraft Music Hall broadcasts of November 9th,

*Glenn Miller (centre) discusses a song with Bing*

16th and 23rd, 1944 were heard on November 23. Ethel Smith guested on the first, Frank Sinatra the second and Rise Stevens the third. There was the usual supporting cast of Eugenie Baird, The Charioteers, and John Scott Trotter's Orchestra. Then on December 21, Bing's KMH shows from 30 November 1944, 7 December 1944, 14 December 1944 and the Christmas Special of 21 December 1944 were broadcast. Guests over that period included Spike Jones, Jerry Colonna and Diana Lynn.

The shows remain on the site for some months so it's well worth checking to see if they are still there. Follow this link:
**https://www.dennismspragg.com/star-spangled-radio-hour/**

**WAMU (88.5 FM)**, the public news/talk station that services the greater Washington, D.C. metropolitan area continues to use Crosby content in its long running *The Big Broadcast* show on Sunday nights hosted by Murray Horwitz. On Christmas Eve, they broadcast the Philco Show from December 25, 1946 and they followed this with a special edition on Christmas Day featuring the Philco Radio Hall of Fame from December 24, 1944 starring Bing and Orson Welles. This is the one when Bing and Orson first did their version of "The Happy Prince". Again, programs remain available for streaming for some time after broadcast.

**WRVO** Public Media is a non-profit public radio network in Oswego, New York licensed to the State University of New York. Mark Lavonier produces a 2-hour daily show called *Tuned to Yesterday* at 10 p.m. each night which features old time radio broadcasts. Bing pops up now and then and on December 18 an edited version of the Bob Hope Show of December 7, 1948 was broadcast with Bing as a guest. Then on January 5, Bing's General Electric show of December 4, 1952 was heard. Well worth checking out as the programs can be streamed for some time afterwards.

Every year in December, co-editor Anton and I record our yearly **Bing Crosby podcast** and it can now be found on YouTube. Search for Jazz Flashes Podcast # 16. It is our fourth in the series, and this time we spent about an hour discussing Bing's film career. Towards the end of the program we also reveal our top-five Crosby movies, and we agree on almost all of them! See if you concur too.

## TV Highlights - UK

A good number of Crosby items have been seen since our last issue was prepared.

| | |
|---|---|
| Andy Williams – My Favorite Duets | Sky Arts |
| Discovering: Bing Crosby | Sky Arts |
| Holiday Inn | Film4 |
| Road to Bali | Sony Movies Classic |
| Road to Morocco | Sony Movies Classic |
| Road to Utopia | Sony Movies Classic |
| Road to Zanzibar | Sony Movies Classic |
| Son of Paleface | Sony Movies Classic |
| The Legendary Bing Crosby | Sky Arts |
| White Christmas | Channel4 |
| White Christmas | Film4 |

*Mary on the Breakfast Show*

BBC1's *The One Show* on December 2 had Mary Crosby talking lovingly about her Dad and saying how proud the family were of the new Christmas album with the LSO. Mary, attractive and charming, came over very well and another guest, comedian Frank Skinner, chimed in with praise of Bing's comedy timing skills. On December 4, Mary popped up again on BBC1's *Breakfast* show and was interviewed with clips of Bing in a variety of Christmas shows with Fred Astaire, the family and David Bowie being shown.

A few days later, Mary was interviewed by RTE Entertainment's Alan Corr about the "Bing at Christmas" album and she outlined Bing's love of Ireland as well as describing Christmas in the Crosby household. She also was interviewed by Brianna Parkins on Virgin Media's Ireland AM programme and again was able to highlight the Irish connection.

Sky News was Mary's next appearance and there was a very pleasant and warm interview with Kay Burley which can now be found on YouTube.

The Crosby family, and Mary in particular, really did a great job in the run-up to Christmas in promoting Bing's image and the new CD with the LSO.

Richard Muirhead stumbled across an Amazon TV advert on November 26 for Bing's Christmas CD on Channel 5 and said that "It was excellent with a number of clips from many of Bing's Christmas Shows." A similar ad was seen on social media sites too.

On *Strictly – It Takes Two* (BBC2) on November 5 it was nice to hear Mr. Crosby's "It's Beginning to Look Like Christmas" being used.

## UK Radio

### The National Presenters

Songs played on the BBC national networks (Radio2 unless stated) of which we were aware over the last four months were:

**Anneka Rice – Junior Choice:**
We Wish You the Merriest (Dec. 25)

**OJ Borg:**
Mele Kalikimaka (Dec. 10)

**Clare Teal:**
Now You Has Jazz (Oct. 27) – White Christmas (Dec. 22)

**Elaine Paige on Sunday:**
Go Tell It on the Mountain (Dec. 8) – The Christmas Song (with LSO) (Dec. 22) – White Christmas (with Pentatonix and LSO) (Dec. 22) – Roxie (Feb. 2)

**Liza Tarbuck:**
Don't Fence Me In (Feb. 1)

**Michael Ball Show:**
White Christmas (with Michael Buble – Dec. 1) - White Christmas (with Michael Ball & Alfie Boe) (Dec. 25)

**The Listening Service** (Radio3)
White Christmas (with Michael Buble - Dec. 22) – Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow! (Dec. 22)

**Words and Music** (Radio3)
Well Did You Evah! (Dec. 29)

Also BBC Radio4 carried an interview with Kathryn and Mary Crosby on the *Today* programme on 22 November covering the release of Bing's war time letters by HLC Properties in support of the Bing at Christmas CD. Mary also gave superb interviews in December to Smooth Radio, to Ray D'Arcy on RTE Radio 1 and to Marty Whelan on RTE lyric fm with tracks from the CD being played on all the shows. She was also interviewed on BBC Radio2's *Good Morning Sunday* show on December 22. Some of Bing's letters to servicemen were read out with excerpts from the new CD being heard. Mary as usual came over very warmly, with her love for her father being evident. The segment finished with a full version of "Peace on Earth / Little Drummer Boy".

### The Local Radio Presenters

Bing was heard all over the place of course with his Christmas songs but I have only picked out the shows playing a fair number of Bing tracks and these are shown below. All of the programmes listed can be heard live on the Internet or later on the BBC i-player.

Gerald Jackson continues be the star using his two programmes on local radio - "Unforgettable" on Radio Lancashire on Sunday evenings at 8 p.m. and the other, the similarly named "Gerald Jackson: Unforgettable" on Radio Manchester on Sunday nights at 10pm to play our man frequently. Gerald does his whole 4-hour stint live. Our member Margaret White regularly has her requests played on the Manchester segment.

Among the songs heard were:

How Can You Buy Killarney (Oct. 20) – An Apple for the Teacher (Oct. 27) – It's Been a Long, Long Time (Nov. 3) – The Bombardier Song (Nov. 10) – The Teddy Bears' Picnic (Nov. 17) – Unchained Melody (Nov. 24) – To See You Is to Love You (Dec. 8) – Road to Morocco (Dec. 8) – The Small One (Dec. 15) – Snow (Dec. 15) – The Magic Window (Dec. 29) – In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening (Dec. 29) – Galway Bay (Jan. 5) – Let's Start the New Year Right (Jan. 5) – The Spaniard That Blighted My Life (Jan. 19) - Play a Simple Melody (Jan. 26) – Busy Doing Nothing (Jan, 26) - Far Away Places (Jan. 26) – Yesterday When I Was Young (Jan. 26) - True Love (Feb. 2) – That's What Life Is All About (Feb. 2) – Route 66 (Feb. 9) - How Can You Buy Killarney (Feb. 16) – The Pessimistic Character (Feb. 23)

***

**Beverley Humphreys presents *Beverley's World of Music:*** (BBC Radio Wales) – Where the Blue of the Night (Oct. 27) – Moonlight Bay (Oct. 27) – Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams (Nov. 24) – I'll See You in My Dreams (Dec. 8) – Moonlight Becomes You (Dec. 8) – Swinging on a Star (Dec. 15) – Dear Hearts and Gentle People (Jan. 19) – Love Walked In (Jan. 26) – Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive (Feb. 9)

**Bill Rennells'** ***Harmony Night*** show with Al Ryan on BBC local radio stations throughout the South East of England and on the Internet. – Jingle Bells (Dec. 8) – I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day (Dec. 22) – Let's Start the New Year Right (Dec. 29) – The Kiss in Your Eyes (Jan. 12) – I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen (Feb. 9)

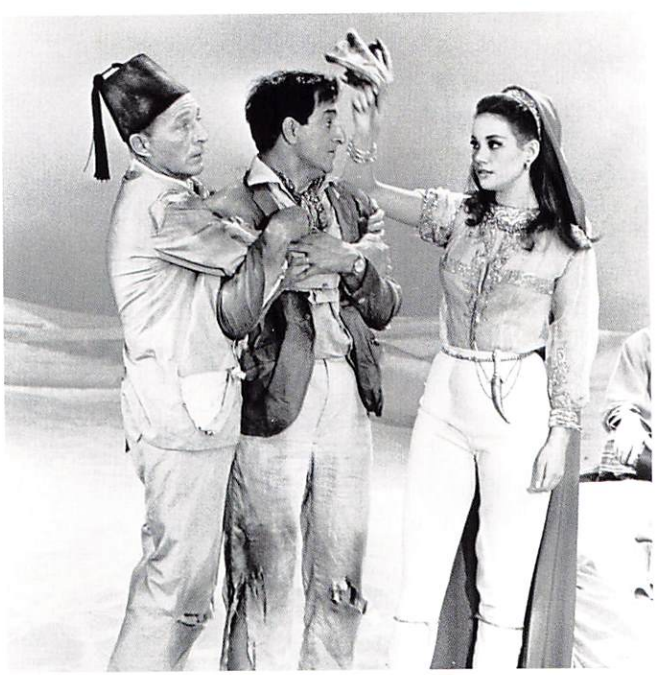
**Kelly-Anne Smith's** ***Easy Sunday*** show on BBC Coventry & Warwickshire plays our kind of music and Crosby songs played include: My Blue Heaven (Oct. 27) – Swinging on a Star (Nov. 17) - Count Your Blessings Instead of Sheep (Nov. 24) – Sam's Song (Dec. 1) – The Secret of Christmas (Dec. 8) – Peace on Earth / Little Drummer Boy (Dec. 15) – Little Jack Frost Get Lost (Dec. 22) – Here Comes Santa Claus (Dec. 22) – Little Jack Frost Get Lost (Dec. 25) – Thanks for the Memory (Dec. 29) – Around the World (Jan. 5) – True Love (Jan. 12) – Swinging on a Star (Jan. 19) – (Love Is) The Tender Trap (Jan. 26) - Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive (Feb

**Malcolm Macfarlane** *macwilmslo@aol.com*

# Once in a While

**Personalities associated with Bing who have left us since our last issue was prepared, include:**

**Claudine Auger**, the French actress best known for her role as Bond girl, Dominique "Domino" Derval, in the James Bond film *Thunderball* (1965) died on December 18 at the age of 78. Starting out as a model, she earned the title of Miss France Monde and was also the first runner-up in the 1958 Miss World contest. When she was 18, she married the 43-year-old writer-director Pierre Gaspard-Huit, and he cast her in several French films. She auditioned for the role of Domino in *Thunderball* and so impressed the producers that they rewrote the part to that of a French woman, to better suit Auger. Although she took lessons to perfect her English, her voice was eventually dubbed by Nikki van der Zyl. The most immediate byproduct of Claudine's stardom was a semi-nude *Playboy* spread. *Thunderball* did however launch her into a successful European movie career, but did little for her otherwise in the United States but it did get her to work with Bing. She starred in a Danny Thomas Special called 'The Road to Lebanon' with Bing which was shown on NBC on 20 April 1966. Bing and Claudine sang a parody of "I Enjoy Being a Girl" together.



*Claudine with Bing and Danny Thomas in The Road to Lebanon*

In 1968, she co-starred with another Bond girl, Ursula Andress, in the Italian comedy *Anyone Can Play*. She had some roles in European films such as *Triple Cross* (1966) and *The Killing Game* (1967). In 1994, Auger appeared in the British television series *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, in "The Three Gables" as Isadora Klein, in one of the last episodes of that series starring Jeremy Brett.

**Gordon Rose**, Bing's last music director, died on February 13 at the good age of 93. We do not know much about his early career but he was the music director at the London Palladium for many years covering several Royal Variety Performances and supporting many top stars, including Bing in his 1977 season. He also backed Bing in his final performance for the BBC on October 11, 1977 and as you will know this was subsequently issued on an LP called "The Final Chapter". Mr. Rose added some cover notes.

*It is with some sadness I record that one of the high spots of my professional life should find me at the end of a long and illustrious list of Musical Directors beginning with Paul Whiteman. Whilst I never could remember a time when there was no Bing, the first time I actually met him was at the preliminary rehearsal for the three provincial dates, London Palladium fortnight and the BBC Broadcast, all of which I was contracted to do with my Orchestra, and which constituted his last professional appearances.*

*An early reserve quickly gave way to a warmth which was always evident in the voice and film performances which I knew so well, and on learning of my interests (I played jazz guitar and trumpet) he delighted in telling me outrageous stories of the great musicians with whom he has been associated. Every evening I would hear of the unpublished exploits of such jazz greats as Louis Armstrong, Eddie Lang, Joe Venuti, Bix Beiderbecke, Frankie Trumbauer, the Teagarden Brothers [sic] etc. etc., and these stories, together with Bing's humorous turn of phrase, were unforgettable.*

*Of Bing Crosby the artiste and of this magnificent voice, surely everything has been said, but I would like to add a small personal observation; I consider myself the most privileged of men to have worked with the greatest entertainer of this century, and am very proud that this all too short season is represented for posterity in this Album.*

*(Gordon Rose, writing on the cover of Bing - The Final Chapter an LP album issued by the BBC in 1980)*

Gordon Rose also took part in the BBC Radio2 programme "Bing Crosby in the Road to Rock'n Roll" broadcast in October 2017 when he spoke very warmly about our man.

**Gene Reynolds**, the American actor, television writer, director, and producer left us on February 3. He was 96. Reynolds was one of the producers of the TV series *M*A*S*H*. As an actor he made his screen debut in 1934 at the age of 11 and had numerous roles for the next twenty years including the part of Larry, the Stage Director, in *The Country Girl* when he worked with Bing. As a director and producer he won six Emmy awards between 1970 and 1980: one for *Room 222*, two for *Lou Grant* and three for *M*A*S*H*, a series that could be both funny and poignant and which proved so popular that it lasted longer than the Korean War, during which it was set.

# The Way We Were

**The section of the magazine where we look at what Bing was doing in years gone by.**

## 100 YEARS AGO

In January 1920, the Fourteenth Census of the United States was completed and indicated that all of the children of Harry and Catherine Crosby were still living at the family home in Spokane.

Bing (aged 16) was in his final year at Gonzaga High School and to earn pocket money he was the janitor at the Everyman's Club (for loggers and miners), working between 5:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. until summer. He was a member of the successful Gonzaga J.Y.A Basketball team. On April 14, he was awarded Premium Place for Elocution in the High School Contest, Senior Section and two weeks later he gave a reading at St. Aloysius Hall in the annual public debate of the Senior Academic Debating Society of Gonzaga University.

*Bing and the other members of a Junior Yard basketball team pose in front of the Administration Building foundation in 1920. Bing is the boy in the middle, number 3.*

## 75 YEARS AGO

As 1945 began, Bing had his regular weekly commitment to the Kraft Music Hall and over the next four months he welcomed a variety of guests including Johnny Mercer, Spike Jones, Duke Ellington, The Andrews Sisters, Joe Venuti, Artie Shaw, the King Cole Trio, and Carmen Cavallaro. He continued with his work for the Armed Forces Radio Service recording *Personal Album*, *Command Performance, Mail Call* and *GI Journal* shows including the famous "Dick Tracy in B Flat".

*With Nat King Cole on the Kraft show*

If that was not enough, in January he starred in a radio version of *Going My Way* with Barry Fitzgerald and George Murphy on CBS with the Lady Esther Screen Guild Players. Bing and Barry were presented with *Redbook* magazine's Annual Motion Picture Award by Paul Lukas during the program. On April 9, the crooner recorded the Lux Radio Theatre version of *Sing You Sinners* which was broadcast on May 7. February saw him starring in the Dupont *Cavalcade of America* broadcast "The Road to Berlin" on NBC which told the story of his trip to Europe in 1944.

On February 26, he began three months' work on the film *The Bells of St. Mary's* having also contributed a song to Twentieth Century-Fox's film short *The All-Star Bond Rally* in support of the Seventh War Loan. He also filmed a short *Meet the Crosbys* with his four sons for the Seventh War Loan Drive.

There was a crisis in his personal life with Dixie Crosby being rushed to St. Vincent's Hospital in January after collapsing with a "respiratory infection." Bing accompanied Dixie to the hospital in an ambulance and remained at her bedside during the night. Two days later she was declared "out of danger following pneumonia". Fortunately, she had recovered enough to accompany Bing on March 15 to Grauman's Chinese Theater for the Academy Awards presentation where Bing received the Oscar for "Best Actor" from Gary Cooper for *Going My Way*. The film received seven Oscars altogether including one for "Swinging on a Star" as the best song.

The groaner was still playing in golf benefits regularly and after the Rio Hondo Golf Club pro-am at Downey, California in aid of the PGA Rehabilitation War Veteran Fund on April 15, Bing and Bob Hope hurried to participate in a two-hour radio tribute on NBC to the late President Roosevelt.

Of course, Mr. Crosby was still making records for Decca but his onerous workload was starting to take a heavy toll on his voice and the critics began to comment on this.

> ***Night and Day***—FT; V. ***Just One of Those Things***—FT; V.
>
> It's a tired Groaner giving out for these two Cole Porter standards. Altho he stays with the ballad tempo, Crosby is far from a "Night and Day" frame of voice for the title tune of the forthcoming Porter picture. While he gets going good for "Just One of Those Things," he gets overly dramatic and the spinning is just one of those things. John Scott Trotter tries hard to cover up with his music. Phono fans will be too tired to play any of these sides.

A session with Xavier Cugat and his Waldorf Astoria Orchestra in January resulted in all four recordings being rejected. The session was tried again in February with more success with "You Belong to My Heart" reaching No. 3 in the *Billboard* Best-Seller lists and spending 14 weeks in the charts. "Baia" too enjoyed some chart success reaching the No. 6 position. However the critics were not impressed with *Billboard* saying "neither Crosby nor Cugat enhance each other's capabilities in combination."

On April 25, Bing recorded "Home Sweet Home" and "Ave Maria" with John Scott Trotter and his Orchestra but neither version was considered satisfactory and the session had to be rescheduled. However the seven sessions he undertook for Decca in the four-month period until April 30 produced seventeen issued singles and resulted in five chart hits which was a pretty good track record all considered.

## 50 YEARS AGO

1970 began with Bing headlining the *Hollywood Palace* anniversary show but the writing was on the wall for the show after seven seasons. On February 7, Bing hosted the final show of the series which consisted of edited highlights of earlier shows with the Bing segments being the only new material.

In January, Bing and Kathryn were hosted by Lawrence and Leonora Wood in Woodsboro in Texas for several days of quail shooting. Bing later recorded a song called "Hunting in Texas" with special lyrics describing the experience.

A letter from Bing in January to British enthusiast Leslie Gaylor gave some clues to his plans.

> I haven't any albums planned in the immediate future, Leslie, although I was considering doing some real old-timers, going back to the 20's – songs about the southern part of the country. There were a lot of good ones written in those days. If I could get an arranger interested in doing something clever with them, we might go ahead with that project.
>
> We are also considering a new Christmas album, but it's tough finding new material that will stand up. Most of the things that I've been associated with have been recorded in two or three different ways, and there isn't any use doing them any more.
>
> I haven't any plans to come to London soon, Leslie. I did talk to Humperdinck about doing a show with him, but have since abandoned the project.

The Bing Crosby Pro-Am Tournament at Pebble Beach was won by Bert Yancey in surprisingly good weather. Bing and Curt Gowdy acted as commentators on NBC-TV on the Saturday and Sunday, and the telecast, starting at 1:30 p.m. on January 25, attained the highest audience rating of any golf tournament to date. Among the show business celebrities playing were Howard Keel, Andy Williams, William Boyd, Forrest Tucker, Hank Ketcham, Clint Eastwood, Frankie Avalon, Glen Campbell, Pat Boone, Tennessee Ernie Ford, Phil Harris, Jack Lemmon, Dean Martin, and Bob Newhart.

On January 27 in the Grand Ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria in New York, Bing took part in a $1000 a plate benefit with Bob Hope, Johnny Cash, Ray Bolger, Johnny Carson, and Raquel Welch for the Eisenhower Medical Center which was being built at Palm Desert. He and Hope sang a medley. Extracts were shown on Bob Hope's television program on February 16. $2million was raised at the benefit which was attended by 1300.

*Bing and Bob entertain at the Waldorf-Astoria*

An *American Sportsman* program with Bing and Bud Boyd fishing for salmon on the Laxa River in Iceland, was shown on February 8 and the groaner also appeared in the final program of the series on April 12 when he talked about conservation.

With the TV show *Goldilocks* due for showing on March 31, Bing recorded two of the songs from it on February 19 for possible commercial release but the project did not proceed. Critical response to *Goldilocks* was lukewarm.

> This update of the familiar children's folk tale was a puzzling network, prime time, programming anomaly. For one thing, it was aired at 8.30 p.m. EST, later than would be indicated by its pre-teen approach to both the story and its affixed message. For those grammar school scholars who stayed up, its half-hour length and lack of new directions were not worth the effort...
>
> (*Variety*, April 8, 1970)

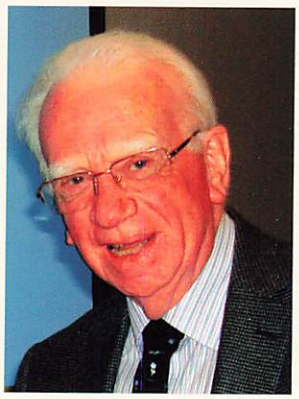
Towards the end of February, Bing commenced taping a TV special called *Cooling It* which was shown on April 13 and this time the reaction was more favourable.

> After a rather soggy start, the Bing Crosby Special, 'Cooling It', righted itself and built into the best Crosby TV outing in quite a while. Using a musical comedy format to embrace the leisure time motif, Crosby fronted the easily paced hour as glib commentator-host. Highlights were Crosby's 'Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head' done with imaginative double screen effects and a Crosby-Peters 'Turn Around' segment that had some pointed writing... Flip Wilson's 'Geraldine' in drag character, pumped great verve into a contrived skit that had Crosby and Dean Martin breaking up over Wilson's camping, after which Martin and Crosby did a showmanly lazy man's medley for a good climax.
>
> (*Variety*, April 15, 1970)

By then, Bing and his family were at their home at Las Cruces, Baja California in Mexico where they remained until May.

# KEEPING TRACK

## RICHARD BAKER BRINGS US UP-TO-DATE



**Richard Baker has a lot to talk about this time.**

## Compact Discs

With Christmas a fading memory, it remains necessary to revisit it to take note of two issues. One was covered last time around, the other is a new entry. One attracts positive comment, the other much less so.

**Bing At Christmas ..... Decca Classical 02508 37628**

Around £6 (UK) $12 (US) Also available for download.

1. It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas (1 Oct. 1951) 2. Sleigh Ride (8 Jan. 1953) 3. Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow! (14 Feb. 1946) 4. White Christmas (feat. Pentatonix) (29 May 1942) 5. I'll Be Home for Christmas (1 Oct. 1943) 6. Jingle Bells (with The Andrew Sisters feat. The Puppini Sisters) (27 Sept. 1943) 7. Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas (5 Oct. 1962) 8. Do You Hear What I Hear (21 Oct. 1963) 9. The Christmas Song (20 Dec. 1953) 10. Little Drummer Boy/Peace on Earth (with David Bowie) (11 Sept. 1977) 11. Twelve Days of Christmas (feat. The Puppini Sisters) (10 May 1949) 12. Winter Wonderland (5 Oct. 1962) 13. The Christmas Song (feat. The Tenors) (20 Dec. 1953) 14. White Christmas (29 May 1942)

*In BING #183 I expressed the hope that the addition of stereo backings might attract a new audience and spread appreciation of Bing more widely. My hopes have been wildly exceeded, with Bing back in the charts, at least in the UK. The Crosby family (particularly Mary Crosby) put a great deal of effort into publicising the issue and they and Decca achieved considerable publicity even though ultimately failing to get Bing into the top spot. But here's to the next time - - . No sooner was it out than David Currington and Malcolm Macfarlane identified original source tracks (information sadly not included in the otherwise quite good booklet) and the result of their work is incorporated in the listing above. Not all of the original tracks are copied straight through – parts have been edited and moved around. I retain my personal preference for the original recordings, but if they are to be "modernised" this is the way to do it and I have to admit to admiration of the achievement. The issue has attracted more interest than any other topic on Crosby Fan World, the Internet discussion forum which I moderate. Some criticism has focused on the new vocal backing with "The Tenors" on "The Christmas Song" which generally seems to be viewed as the least satisfactory track, and several doubts were expressed about adding a new stereo overlay to those parts that were recorded in stereo in the first place. Possibly the whole package is slightly short measure (at around half the length possible for a fully packed CD), but overall Bravo! Decca. Also Bravo! Mary Crosby, who was inexhaustibly popping up all over the place on British media outlets. I do not know if there was any comparable activity elsewhere.*

## Bing Crosby – The Christmas Album ..... Platinum Music Ireland PMI CD4263

Around £11 (UK) $15 (US)

1. White Christmas (1947) 2. Silent Night (1947) 3. Here Comes Santa Claus (1949) 4. The Little Drummer Boy (1962) 5. Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas (1962) 6. The Twelve Days of Christmas (1949) 7. Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow! (1962) 8. The Christmas Song (1947) 9. God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen (1942) 10. Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer (1950) 11. The First Noel (1949) 12. Jingle Bells (1943) **13. We Wish You a Merry Christmas. (Edited version of 24 Dec. 1962 radio "A Christmas Sing with Bing" with Johnny Mercer, Rosemary Clooney, the Norman Luboff Choir, Paul Weston and his Orchestra)** 14. I'll Be Home for Christmas (1943) 15. Santa Claus Is Comin' to Town (1943) 16. Adeste Fideles (O Come All Ye Faithful) (1942) 17. Christmas in Killarney (1951) 18. O Holy Night (1962) 19. Winter Wonderland (1962) 20. Silver Bells (1950) 21. Sleigh Ride (1952) 22. Christmas Medley - Deck the Halls/Away in a Manger/I Saw Three Ships (1949) 23. Snow (1954) 24. Happy Holiday (1942) 25. Faith of Our Fathers (1942) 26. It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas (1951) 27. That Christmas Feeling (1950) L5821 28. White Christmas (1954 with Danny Kaye, Peggy Lee).

*The publicity says "DeLuxe Edition" or "Collector's Edition" and that it comes "with an exclusive retro white disc", which when taken with the full price appears to suggest something special. So the offer is promising, but what is a "collector's edition? It must surely attain high levels of quality, offer good information about content, have something that, if not unique, is at least unusual. A detailed look shows areas where it falls far short of such ideals. Track 21 is listed on all the websites I have seen (but not on the record insert itself) as "Medley - Sleigh Ride - I'd Like To Hitch A Ride With Santa Claus". I don't think Bing ever recorded such a medley. It is just "Sleigh Ride". Track 22 on both websites and insert is identified as a Christmas medley that includes "That Christmas Feeling", "I'd Like To Hitch A Ride With Santa Claus" etc with Gary and Lindsay. It isn't that medley from June 1950 at all but as I have shown above. If the producers had but paused to listen to their product - just listening to a few words should suffice, they might have realised they had the wrong carols! In fact none of Bing's family appear on any tracks. Passing over such basic errors, we come to qualitative matters. Several tracks sound fuzzy and unfocussed and the visual waveform confirms that the two channels of otherwise mono recordings differ slightly. I think LPs from the 1970s or thereabouts with echo chamber treatment to create quasi-stereo effects have been used. On the other hand tracks that were recorded in the 1960s in perfectly good stereo have lost much of the stereo effect and compare badly with the originals. The insert – a single folded sheet – contains a bare minimum track listing, with, as noted, basic errors. This is not a "Collector's" item by any stretch of the imagination and a premium price is not justified. It has been suggested that the issue was attempting to ride on the coat tails of "Bing at Christmas", or may be even some sort of "spoiler". There are similarities in the design of cover. If so the producers were remarkably quick and that could account for the carelessness. However one track alone could be of interest. Track 13 is in good audio quality and so far as I can trace is the first appearance on CD. It consists of the opening of the radio show, Bing's first song and a later reprise with guests. Some intervening material has been cut to make a satisfying whole. But there is no mention of these origins or identification of the participants, another example of the total lack of care. But it will be an expensive way to get that track when collectors will already the others in much better transfers. There are infinitely better quality Christmas compilations. Most are cheaper as well.*

## Philco Radio Time – Starring Bing Crosby ..... Sepia 1353

£10.95 (UK) $price not known (US)

Dates of broadcast shown preceding all selections for that date.

**CD1**

Oct. 16, 1946 - 1. Where the Blue of the Night intro / Nov. 6, 1946 – 2. Five Minutes More / Nov. 13, 1946 - 3. Timber - In the Evening by the Moonlight - You Are My Sunshine – (with Ezio Pinza)* / Jan. 22, 1947 - 4. If You Were the Only Girl* / 5. La Borrachita – (with Lina Romay)* / 6. I Love You) For Sentimental Reasons* / Mar. 5, 1947 - 7. Anniversary Song – (with Al Jolson) / Mar. 12, 1947 - 8. Among My Souvenirs* / April 30, 1947 - 9. Guilty* / May 7, 1947 - 10. Country Style* / 11. Linda / May 14, 1947 - 12. How Are Things in Glocca Morra?* / May 28, 1947 - 13. Time after Time* / Oct. 1, 1947 - 14. Medley - Mam'selle / Chi-Baba, Chi-Baba / Peg O' My Heart* / Oct. 8, 1947 - 15. Feudin' and Fightin' / 16. Medley - That's My Desire / I Wonder, I Wonder / I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now* / Oct. 15, 1947 - 17. Almost Like Being in Love / Oct. 22, 1947 - 18. Sweet Betsy from Pike / Clementine – (with Burl Ives) / 19. Just an Old Love of Mine* / Nov. 5, 1947 - 20. You Do* / Dec. 17, 1947 - 21. I Still Get Jealous* / Jan. 21, 1948 - 22. With a Hey! And a Hi! And a Ho! Ho! Ho!* / Jan. 28, 1948 - 23. The Best Things in Life Are Free / Mar, 31, 1948 - 24. Medley with Dick Powell - I Only Have Eyes for You - With Plenty of Money and You (Dick Powell solo) - You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby - Jeepers Creepers* - Shuffle Off to Buffalo - Thanks a Million / April 7, 1948 - 25. How Lucky You Are* / April 14, 1948 - 26. Love Is So Terrific* / April 21, 1948 - 27. Hooray for Love*

**CD2**

April 28, 1948 - 1. I May Be Wrong* /May 5, 1948 - 2. Blue Shadows on the Trail* / May 19, 1948 - 3. Baby Face* / 4. Nature Boy* / May 26, 1948 - 5. You're Too Dangerous, Cherie* / Sept. 29, 1948 - 6. My Happiness* / 7. A Tree in the Meadow* / Oct. 20, 1948 - 8. Rambling Rose* / 9. Something to Remember You By (with Marilyn Maxwell)* / Oct. 27, 1948 - 10. Hair of Gold, Eyes of Blue* / Dec. 8, 1948 - 11. Cuanto Le Gusta* / Jan. 5, 1949 - 12. My Darling, My Darling* / Jan. 19, 1949 - 13. Missouri Waltz* / Feb. 9, 1949 - 14. I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm* / Feb. 23, 1949 - 15. So in Love (with Peggy Lee) / Mar. 2, 1949 - 16. Sunflower* / Mar. 16, 1949 - 17. You Was (with Peggy Lee) / April 6, 1949 - 18. Once in Love with Amy* / 19. While the Angelus Was Ringing* / April 13, 1949 - 20. Down the Old Ox Road (with Peggy Lee and The Gonzaga Glee Club) / April 20, 1949 - 21. Cruising Down the River* / May 11, 1949 - 22. Riders in the Sky (with Perry Botkin, guitar and Izzy Rosenbaum string bass)* / 23. Blue Hawaii (with Peggy Lee and Alec Templeton piano)* / May 18, 1949 - 24. Careless Hands* / 25. When Is Sometime? (with Rhonda Fleming)* / May 25, 1949 - 26. Again (with Dorothy Kirsten)* / June 1, 1949 - 27. Buttons and Bows* / 28. It's Magic* / 29. So Dear To My Heart* / 30. I Got Lucky in the Rain (with Loulie Jean Norman)* / 31. Medley - Far Away Places - So Tired - Powder Your Face with Sunshine* / 32. Some Enchanted Evening - Farewell message*

* = First time on CD so far as I am aware. Whilst the remaining tracks have appeared on CDs many are no longer available.

*First I must declare an interest, because I supplied a number of the source discs. However that was the limit of my involvement. Editor Malcolm selected the material and wrote his usual informative notes whilst the issue is otherwise a collaboration between him and Sepia Records. Malcolm's selection gives a very good representation of Bing's nearly three years with Philco Radio Time, and of his guests, whilst trying to concentrate on songs that were not recorded in the studio for commercial release. As shown a large proportion have not been issued on CD or been unavailable recently. I find the whole selection entertaining and varied, covering all moods and the wide range of genres which Bing managed so well. Most of the accompaniment is of course, the John Scott Trotter Orchestra, but Buddy Cole and Alec Templeton also provide pianos accompaniment on some, whilst the resident vocal backing group, the Rhythmaires, are well represented. Those who are familiar with Bing's radio shows will know that he introduced his songs with informative and sometimes witty comment, and many of selections include those short introductions, together with interchange with guests and ad-libs which all give a strong feeling of immediacy, in some cases also setting a context. The overall effect, taking the sequence as a whole is almost of a complete radio show (shorn of the comic sketches). The collection is in chronological order and is topped and tailed with the signature tune introducing the first show and the closing comments to the last show. Wonderful stuff! I am delighted with the set which is of good audio quality (thanks to some excellent re-mastering by Robin Cherry), highly entertaining and gives a very good representation of the musical content of the original radio shows. It all sounds fresh and it is difficult to grasp that this material is now over 72 years old.*

## All Time Greats – Bing Crosby ..... HMV 5389522

£4:99 (UK Only)

**CD1**

1. Dear Hearts and Gentle People 2. Around the World 3. Chattanoogie Shoe-Shine Boy 4. Galway Bay 5. Gone Fishin' 6. Count Your Blessings Instead of Sheep 7. Temptation 8. The Isle of Innisfree 9. Quicksilver 10. Changing Partners 11. Shanghai 12. Stranger in Paradise 13. Mule Train 14. Harbor Lights 15. Play a Simple Melody 16. Far Away Places 17. Whiffenpoof Song 18. Sunshine Cake 19. Some Enchanted Evening 20. White Christmas

**CD2**

1. Pennies from Heaven 2. Don't Fence Me In 3. Moonlight Becomes You 4. Deep In the Heart of Texas 5. How Can You Buy Killarney? 6. You Are My Sunshine 7. If I Had My Way 8. Swinging On a Star 9. Sierra Sue 10. Pistol Packin' Mama 11. Only Forever 12. MacNamara's Band 13. Please 14. San Fernando Valley 15. Sunday, Monday or Always 16. I'll Be Seeing You 17. On the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe 18. Ciribiribin 19. Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral 20. In the Cool, Cool, Cool Of the Evening

*HMV, the UK record retailers, have introduced a series of CDs under the over–arching title "All Time Greats". In terms of the ratio of cost / quality I believe they have excelled. Each consists of a 2CD set and Bing's has a total of 40 songs. It is "Exclusive" and I don't think you'll find it anywhere other than HMV's own shops and website, https://store.hmv.com/store/music/cd/all-time-greats-(hmv-exclusive)-(3) nor will they send outside the UK. Orders over £10 are post free, so examination of their other offerings is called for. There are no notes but writers and accompanists are given. After some of my earlier comments I must explain why I am covering this. I think it is the equal of most compilations and better than many, giving a very good overview of some of Bing's best output, and in terms of price could hardly offer a better bargain. It is the type of collection that I'd pull out to play to someone who I was trying to convince of Bing's best. The sound quality is excellent.*

## Bing Crosby 4CD Seven Classic Albums ..... Reel To Reel RTRCD183

Around £6 (UK) Around $13 (US)

*In BING #172 Spring 2016, I reported on a 4 CD set from Real Gone Music titled "Seven Classic Albums". The seven albums were "Some Fine Old Chestnuts", "Songs I Wish I Had Sung the First Time Around", "Bing Sings Whilst Bregman Swings", "Bing with a Beat" (stereo), "Fancy Meeting You Here" (stereo), "El Senor Bing" (mono) and "Bing and Satchmo" (stereo). As I said at the time I had not sampled any part of it but made an assumption (which may or may not have been correct) that the same tracks would have been used for the "Fancy Meeting You Here" segment as had been used for the similar Rosemary Clooney compilation which I did have. I reported that, in effect, it had been engineered for modern listening, with compressed dynamics and limited frequency range, ideally suited to small limited range speakers or noisy conditions. The set has now been re-issued with a new label and revised packaging – a four panel fold out digipak instead of a double sized crystal case. There are still no notes – merely a track listing on the back of the case. I have been able to examine it in detail and find to my surprise that the audio treatment is now quite different to the tracks I sampled from the Clooney set. I am uncertain whether I might have been unfair in my original conclusions about audio quality but in its current guise the sound is clean with dynamics and frequency range comparable to my own original albums. The set in its current form does represent a very cheap alternative for those needing the tracks though the (much more expensive) UMG/BCE issues of several do offer a contrast in quality treatment, with additional attractive material and comprehensive notes. The visual distinction between covers is that the original issue on the Real Gone label is grey-sepia with a portrait of Bing. The Reel To Reel issue has a blue title band at the top and miniature coloured images of the seven albums at bottom. The re-issue is cheaper than the original on Amazon!*

*Whilst in the bargain basement a bumper bundle of* ***Rosemary Clooney*** *albums has been issued, titled "**Milestones of a Pop Legend – 22 Original Albums on 10 CDs**", (Amazon incorrectly state 20 albums). On the Document label (catalogue 4 053796 005 151), (UK around £16, US $24). This is a German concern, associated with or part of Intense Media. An Internet address but a visit brings up a message that it is not yet operative, so the concern may be very new. Two of the albums are incomplete, lacking the non Clooney tracks, which is not unreasonable, (though inconsistent as there are other non Clooney tracks). I am covering this because*

*of the inclusion, again, of the complete "Fancy Meeting You Here" and Rosie's tracks from "How the West Was Won", Bing featuring on both. There are also Clooney's own recordings of songs from White Christmas (she was excluded from the so–called soundtrack LP, her part in the film being taken by Peggy Lee on record). I had the opportunity of handling the set, taking rips of some tracks and examining them in detail. From an audio point of view the samples I examined are good. The set comes in a stout card box with each of the CDs in their own thin card sleeve. There are 10 lines of rudimentary notes about Rosemary's life in English with German equivalent. Information is otherwise limited to titles, writers, vocal duettists and dates of issue of the original LPs. With a couple of exceptions there is nothing about orchestral accompaniments or recording dates etc. One of the albums recorded in stereo is given here in mono. Rosemary's recording career is well covered from very early days with Betty Clooney and Tony Pastor, to 1960.*

**Al Jolson – The Kraft Music Hall Years 1947-1949 (3-CD set) ..... Sepia 1349**

Around £16 (UK) Around $19 (US) (pre issue advertised prices)

*In BING #183 I mentioned "Al Jolson - The Decca Years" from Sepia. Now Sepia have issued a matching 3-CD set of 85 tracks covering Jolson's period as host of KMH following Bing's departure. The period falls within the time span covered by the Decca studio recordings and inevitably some songs appear in both sets, but the differences between radio and record are quite marked. In some ways it is surprising how little real overlap there is. Some songs covered are not usual Jolson territory and the wider range included in the radio broadcasts is interesting. There is no Bing here. Indeed there is nothing of anyone other than Joley with occasional interjections from Oscar Levant and a "bonus" track with Jimmy Durante. Apart from the bonus track the content is taken from seven Decca LPs issued in the 1950s and 60s which were drawn from the KMH broadcasts. The LPs are here presented, so far as I can establish, in their entirety. Decca edited the broadcast originals for the LPs by stringing songs together to make medleys and by adding repeats of choruses – you actually get more of Jolson in some songs than the original broadcast! Jolson's verve comes over well and the occasional semi comic exchanges with Oscar Levant give a break in the otherwise relentless energy expended by Jolson. If you like him you cannot fail to enthuse over the set.*

## DVDs and BLU-RAY

Nothing much to say under this heading, I'm afraid, though in trawling through various retailer's websites I was surprised to note a fair number of Bing's films in foreign dubbed versions. I covered a French dubbing of "The Emperor Waltz" in BING #183 but I now see versions of several films in Spanish and German as well. I therefore explored the Amazon tributaries in France, Germany and Spain and have to admit to a little surprise at the continued apparent popularity of Bing (and Bob) which is clearly sufficient for such foreign language productions, of what are, after all, quite ancient films. The surprises continue in the translation of titles. "Holiday Inn" becomes "l'amour Chante et Danse" (Love Sings and Dance) in French, "High Society" becomes "Die Oberen Zehntausend" (The Top Ten Thousand) in German, and "The Road to Hong Kong" is "Dos Frescos En Orbita" (Two Fresh in Orbit) in Spanish! Those might be over-literal translations.

I think that all will come with their original soundtrack as well as the dubbed version (with the songs left untouched) and I can confirm that this is indeed the case with "The Emperor Waltz". I have hitherto not been conscious of such dubbings of Bing's films on DVD or Blu-ray. It does seem though that some are being imported to both Britain and America, presumably to meet demands from local speakers of the languages in question. Most carry European regional coding though I did note some in Spanish with regional code A/1. In the case of "The Emperor Waltz" I believe the French dubbing is the only version available on Blu-ray with regional code B/2. It is possible that there are others that could fill gaps.

## The Internet

Motion Picture Relief Fund Testimonial

to

Bing Crosby

This is to express our appreciation and our gratitude for the unselfish service you contributed in behalf of your Motion Picture Relief Fund on the broadcast of February 5, 1939 over the Columbia Transcontinental Network from Hollywood, California.

Board of Directors Motion Picture Relief Fund

by Jean Hersholt

President

There is the usual array of hopefuls offering material including CDs and DVDs on eBay at extravagant asking prices, often for issues which are still available from the original sources, as well as the usual offerings of 78s invariably described as "rare" despite the fact that many sold in millions. However, amongst this dross I noted a certificate recording Bing's work for the Motion Picture Relief Fund in 1939. It reads "...for the unselfish service...on the broadcast of February 5, 1939 over the Columbia Transcontinental Network from Hollywood, California." It is signed by the President of the Relief Fund and is in a navy blue presentation case with gilt lettering.

But then we have an offer of a sequence of 78rpm Indian pressings from the 1940s. They are of course claimed to be rare, at asking prices of $139.30 each. They might be, but probably because most examples will have been junked. Many were brought to Britain and possibly elsewhere, from India or far east by servicemen after the war and later, and they shared the same characteristics: they received rough treatment (repeated playing with worn needles in smoke-filled military barracks?) – and because the shellac available in India at the time was poor, they can be very noisy. The photos of those offered show them to be in very poor condition. Let buyers beware. A far better Internet platform for the sale and purchase of used records, in my opinion, is Discogs.com where for particular issues you can see the range of prices asked and attained, the numbers currently on offer and wanted, and other information such as the lowest, highest and median prices. It is not an auction site but if you feel an asking price is unrealistic you can make an offer.

**Richard Baker** *bakerstonb@gmail.com*

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